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INNING WINDS.

A Novel.

BY

WILLIS G. EMERSON.

"Treat the Goddess like a modest fair,
Not over dress nor leave wholly bare,
Let not each beauty everywhere be spied,
When half the skill is decently to hide."

POPE.

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TROW'S
PRINTING AND BOOKBINDING COMPANY,
NEW YORK.

Affectionately Dedicated

TO

MY WIFE.

PREFACE.

Do good unto your fellow men by adding to their sum of human happiness. Win them from the cankering troubles of life, to while away a pleasant hour. Ever and always let your influence for good grow with the ripening of the years, as a circle widens and widens when a pebble is dropped on the face of smooth waters.

WILLIS G. EMERSON.

CRESTON, IOWA,
December 25th, 1884.

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WINNING WINDS.

CHAPTER I.

LEROY PEMBROOKE.

ONCE upon a time, somewhere between a quarter and a half century ago, there lived a gentleman of moderate wants and limited means, named Leroy Pembrooke. We do not wish to infer that every one of limited means is fortunate enough to have moderate wants, but it so happened in this case.

Leroy Pembrooke lived not many hundreds of miles from Cinapolis, one of the many thriving cities in our great Union.

The little village where he received his weekly paper, and where he would have posted his letters, had he ever mailed any, we shall know as Hampton, a sparsely settled inland place with a few wooden stores, of olden date, and a few churches, with their tall, tapering steeples pointing heavenward.

How long Pembrooke had lived there no one exactly knew—possibly ten or a dozen years; where he came from no one knew or stopped to inquire. He had been so long at Hampton that he seemed one of its fixtures.

Hampton itself was not more than a dozen or fifteen years old, while as to Pembrooke's age no one pretended to know,—the dates on his full-bearded face said thirty-five at least. His possessions consisted of a few acres of land adjoining the village, which he yearly tilled.

The stage-coach came to Hampton twice every week, and on the very afternoon of the day that our story

opens, a certain person did come to Hampton who had known Leroy Pembrooke years before. It was a lady of very prepossessing appearance, who came to teach the village school. Notwithstanding the change in Leroy Pembrooke's appearance—the once smooth face, now full-bearded,—there was mutual recognition between the lady and himself the moment their eyes met, as she alighted from the stage-coach.

Years before he had attended college at Covesville, and there had met Miss Betsey Goodsil, the new teacher, and was, in those college days, seemingly greatly attached to her. At that time she was a mere child in her teens, and readily believed all the pleasant words whispered to her by Leroy Pembrooke. He never told her where his home was, or anything of his people; nor did he ever graduate with his class, but very suddenly, and very unceremoniously, took his departure without even so much as saying good-bye to Betsy Goodsil; and to the day of her arrival at Hampton she had never heard aught of him.

It might not be out of place to say that she thought of him very often; for in him she saw her ideal. Possibly this accounted for her never having married.

Her family was poor, and she was at last forced to believe he had deserted her for wealth. Possibly her solution was a true one; possibly not. In less than a year afterward, however, he made Hampton his home, where he had resided ever since.

About a week after Betsey Goodsil's arrival, Leroy Pembrooke received a letter, which the postmaster declared was the first and only one Pembrooke had ever received since he came to Hampton. What news the letter contained or who it was from, remains to this day a mystery. But let us hope there will come a time in the unraveling of our story when the reader will know its contents. Soon after this, much to the surprise of everyone, Leroy Pembrooke took it into his head to marry. He no doubt could have won success with some blushing maiden of the village who was giggling in her teens, or with the merchant's daughter, who was languishing for a lover, but he seemed to care nothing for

the one nor the other, but assiduously paid his attentions to Betsey Goodsil, whose early affections for him seemed to quickly rekindle, and in due course of time they were married. It is at least just to say that the marriage was one of pure attachment. We do not presume to know whether they would not have married for position or for money had the chance presented itself prior to their meeting at Hampton; but they seemed either to have had no such opportunity, or if they had, no one at Hampton knew of it. They contented themselves by doing the very wisest thing possible—marrying for the very love they had for one another, if we might judge from appearances. Very like two horse-racers who are out of funds and who meet by chance on some old, half-forgotten race-course. Neither have money to bet, hence nothing to lose, and when nothing is lost nothing is won. So they lead their spirited animals toward the wire, side by side, and run for the very fascination the race itself affords them; and such a race, as such a marriage, is invariably the most satisfactory in the end, as neither party feels cheated, nor complains of foul play.

Leroy Pembrooke's married life commenced much as his single days had ended. No great change. The old house might have been repaired a little here and there to make it more homelike, but that was all. Year after year glided by, and as Leroy one day said to Betsey, the very years seemed to go by as the seasons used to. Thus time slipped noisely on until the hush and rural quiet of Hampton was broken by the hurry and confusion of building railways. Two roads were built through Hampton in one year. One from the south-east, terminating in Chicago; the other, called the "Through Trunk Line," from New York to St. Louis.

Hampton was beautifully located on the banks of a little rocky stream, that ran, year after year, from early spring to late fall, telling the same noisy story, and all the time wearing its bed of smooth stones smoother and smoother. After the railroads came, the little stream was put to use. A dam was put across, and a large building erected which projected out over the waters and

over the double doors in front the words "Hampton Mills" were painted in large letters. Then the old song of the babbling stream was gone and heard no more, but in its stead was heard the angry sputtering and splashing of the waters as they went tumbling and falling, hurry-scurry, over the large wheel into the channel below, rushing along as if glad to get away from such a pent-up place.

Strange as it may seem, the railroads did very little to improve Hampton. It was nothing but a way-station on both lines. Other towns and villages sprang up along the line, and, as the shop-keepers said, cut off their trade. Very few new buildings were erected, and the old ones remained unchanged, except to look more dingy as time went by. The same old creaking signs swung in front of the stores and shops which had been put up years before. The little wooden-colored cottage at the Suburb, with the two giant oak trees near by, was the home of Leroy Pembrooke and his wife Betsey, who, good soul that she was, had in due course of time borne unto him a son, who was christened by the fond father immediately after his arrival with the name of Penfield.

"Penfield Pembrooke, my heir," said Leroy, with considerable earnestness and warmth. But what he was to be heir to, a competency or poverty, he did not explain. Perhaps he did not fully understand that question in his mind; or it might have been that the elder Pembrooke referred to something far back of anything that was known at Hampton; or, possibly, only referred to the few acres of land, which, year after year, he tilled. Whether it was the one or the other, all would some day belong to Pen. The nickname "Pen" was almost from the first given to the new arrival, "because," as Aunt Zurilda said, "it was decidedly unpoetic; and then there were entirely too many syllables to pronouce to say 'Penfield.' It might do when he got to be a man, but now he didn't amount to enough, and she doubted mightily if he ever improved."

Aunt Zurilda was Mrs. Pembrooke's sister. Possibly she had not seen more than thirty winters, but it was

hardly possible to think she was younger. Her angular features were beginning to wrinkle; in figure she was rather spare,—in fact, inclined to be bony; her face was thin and weazen, the lower part of which projected out and ended in a sharp chin; her nose was rather too large for her face, and had an inclination to turn up; and you would have known at once she had cheek bones by their noticeable prominence. The time, if ever, when she would have passed as handsome was certainly long years ago. It was said that years before, when she was quite young, she had a bitter experience in a love affair, the poetry of which was still fresh and green in the spinster's heart. In fact, she had a hobby (a weakness some thought) to this day for poetry. She had come to Hampton only a short time before, and seemed angry to think she was there. By the way she looked at Leroy one would have thought she was angry because he had married Betsey, and she certainly was indignant to think the new arrival was not a girl; "and the name 'Penfield' too," she said, "was distressingly unpoetic; in fact, simply horrid."

At the very hour of the same day that Penfield Pembroke came into this world an event of great similarity happened in another part of Hampton. It was at the home of a Mr. Brinkerhoff, and the infant had been given the name of Hamlin at once. As the child said nothing against the name, the elder Brinkerhoff remarked that he considered his silence on the subject to be a good and sufficient evidence of the acceptance of said name; accordingly, early the following morning, the family Bible was brought forward, and the name "Hamlin Brinkerhoff," with date and fact of his arrival, duly recorded. While this was being done, Leroy Pembrooke was chronicling the facts relative to Penfield's arrival. Thus two were born into the world at the same time who were destined to pursue widely different lives. Which is the preferable life for the rising young to imitate, we leave the reader to decide when he shall have accompanied us to the end.

In time they grew to be healthy, care-free boys, and great companions, both at play and at school, but very

different in many ways. Pen was rather small of his age, timid and retiring. The evening stories his mother told him of privations and hardships which she, in younger days, had met with, and which are so prevalent in the big world of cities, caused him to shrink from such tales of misery, and his young, overflowing soul shed tears of sympathy, causing him to become far more attached to his home, and especially to his bed-room, where his books were kept in a box which he had fastened with his own hands to the wall.

With Hamlin Brinkerhoff, or Lin, as he was called, it was quite different. The tales of hunger, hardships, and dire poverty were listened to by him with all the attention given them by young Pembrooke, yet he heard them differently, and he could deduce from them but two facts, which he termed key-notes, the first of which was, that to be happy one must possess the luxuries of high life, and the second, the luxuries of life are purchasable with money. In short, he considered riches the only true source of happiness and power; that to acquire wealth was proper, no matter by what method, so it was not discovered felony; that all things else were subordinate to money. Nor did he confine himself to theory alone, or permit his faculties to rust in mere abstract speculations. Even when in the primary schools he commenced practicing as a gainer of goods by speculation and usury. His capital stock consisted of marbles, slate-pencils, jack-knives, etc. He did not confine himself to charging interest at even usurious rates, but usually succeeded in keeping the entire principal, and the boy who traded or borrowed of Lin Brinkerhoff was fortunate to retain ten per cent. of his original stock of school-boy possessions. At this writing, we know of certain money-mongers, who seem to do business by the same rule, which is certainly easy enough and simple to comprehend. It is, make a dollar earn a dollar, though the new dollar be taken from the widow's mite.

Notwithstanding all these defects in Lin's character, it can not be said his reputation was bad, either with his teacher at school or with the people of the village generally. At school he was studious, and learned rapidly.

In his books he saw an advantage over ignorance, and he was ambitious to stand on the vantage ground. While out of school, he was praised by his teacher; and old men, who ought to have known better, would laugh at his keeness, and say, "Lin will take care of himself; he will win his way," and many other such remarks, insignificant, perhaps, within themselves, yet meaning everything toward encouraging in the boy a disposition that was by nature his greatest enemy.

Little Pen was an apt and ready scholar, and read much besides his class books. He loved to ramble through the quaint old village, and down the lanes among the shade trees to the ever-talking brook, among the large, leafy oaks, and away still further into the deep woods. He had an interest in all these—a bond of attachment, to him, a kind of kinship, growing day by day and year by year stronger and stronger, and in his after years only, can we see how strong his love for these old haunts of childhood really was.

Years before, when these boys were but babes, the guns at Fort Sumpter echoed over the Republic, sounding the tocsin of war, marking the end and the commencement of an old and a new epoch. Questions that the ballot-box and the eloquence of the learned statesmen of the day could not or did not settle, were handed over to marshaled armies to settle in cruel battle. Mr. Brinkerhoff was one of the first who responded to his country's call. He went away, with many others, on a certain summer's day, under the flaunting flag of his country, which kissed the breezes alike of morning and night, keeping step to the stirring strains of music. He went away, but he never returned. His fate was the story of thousands of others who fell on the field of battle and sleep in unmarked graves. The cruelties of war robbed Lin of a father in his infancy, and he had never known the counsel of a father's deep-felt interest.

Almost a dozen years of these boys lives have now flown by; heretofore they had been uneventful, but now there was to be a change.

In the following spring, on a clear, bright day, Pen was told that he was to be taken to Covesville to visit a

few days with his Aunt Zurilda. He hardly knew why he was going. He certainly had never formed any great attachment for his aunt, as she always seemed so sour and crabbed when she visited them ; but as it was his first trip away from home there was a novelty in the drive, to which the young are always susceptible. Had Pen been more observant of the peculiar line of goods, tiny articles of wear which the sewing girl had been engaged on for the past month, he would have known that another heir was expected ; but he did not know. He only knew that he was going to Aunt Zurilda's. His mother had never parted with him before, and when she bade him good-by, Pen saw two great tears trembling on her cheeks; and as she stooped down to kiss him they fell on his face, and as they did so they seemed to loose the fount of his own tender feelings, and he sobbed outright. And when he got down to the little gate in front, where was hitched the horse and carriage, he felt as if he must, and did, go back along the graveled walk and again kiss his mother good-by, and tell her he would soon come back again. After this he felt better, and even called good-by to Lin with right good cheer, as they passed him just as they were turning into the old road that led away into the country. He went away from the home he had always known, and known as he would never know it again. After this there came a night when preparations were hastily made for the reception of Leroy Pembrooke's second heir, and on the following morning when darkness gave way to light, and the dawn brightened into day, clusters and knots of figures might have been seen conversing on the street corners and in front of the shops in silent whispers. There had been a birth at Mr. Pembrooke's, and there had been a death. A baby girl had been born, hence there was rejoicing, but it was changed to weeping. The infant girl had scarcely said to those around, "I live," when the chord of life was broken and the mother's spirit joined those of kindred gone before. The baby's life commenced as the mother's ceased. Within that little cottage was the smiling June and the bleak December ; the budding flowers and the fading leaves ; the fresh-blown daisies and the withered

grass; the morning and the night; the new and the old; the beginning and the end; all were there. All so strangely new; so real, so unreal; so expected, so unexpected.

The little baby was carefully cared for, and the last sad rites for the mother performed. Leroy Pembrooke was broken-hearted. The strong man of a few days before was no more, but instead a weak and exhausted man who took his bed to find a rest this world could not give him.

"Such things must happen," remarked an old friend. "It is not right to rebel against Divine Providence," said the clergyman; and the neighbors told him he must live for his children, but to all these entreaties he was seemingly deaf, and turned languidly and exhausted on his pillow. He called for Pen. "My boy Pen, where is he?" and then he talked incoherently of times long, long past, when he himself was a happy, roving boy at school.

Pen and Aunt Zurilda fortunately arrived, and soon the latter was told the sad news. And then Pen was taken to his father, whose fit of wandering seemed temporarily past, and on poor sobbing Pen's head he bestowed his blessing, and told him of his infant sister and bade him live and care for her, and commended both to One who never deserts the fatherless children, and then he asked to be alone with his son, and when they all withdrew he whispered a secret to the boy and bade him keep it sacredly. Then, turning his face on his pillow, he fell into a peaceful, dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER II.

THE INIMITABLE WILLETS IS INTRODUCED.

LEROY PEMBROOKE slept in the little churchyard at Hampton, by the side of a new-made mound where his life-companion had been laid to rest. The church was an old time-worn structure and

the painted glass was ragged with age, like an old man in his dotage, so much of the paint here and there had been chipped off by the ruthless hand of time. Just back of the church, among the tufted grasses, were the tombstones, so white and so suggestive of quiet repose. Some of the mounds were green with velvety grasses; others lined about with mossy shells from the sea; others richly decked with fragrant flowers, while others still were unmarked by headstones and weeded over, neglected and almost forgotten. How true it has been said: Life is a passing shadow; 'tis like the shadow of a bird in flight, so hurriedly, in many cases, does it pale and pale from our memories away!

At the sacred altar of the church the prattling child receives baptism, and later bows over the communion table. Time rolls on, and at last there comes a joyful morn when the old bell rings out clear and happy, and before this same altar the marriage vows are breathed while the organ peals forth its cheerful notes of joy. Time passes away, and at last there comes a time when the muffled bell tolls forth the solemn notes of death, and the once child is borne softly and slowly down the aisle out to an open grave, while the organ breathes a measured dirge and sobs a requiem over the lifeless clay. Thus life and death follow in each other's wake.

Leroy Pembrooke's marriage had been a happy one. So, also, let us hope, their spirits, in the other world where doubt is unknown, will commune as only congenial spirits can.

If there was any hidden secret in his heart it remained only with himself, unless he had parted with it on his death-bed. No wife could ask for a more considerate and attentive husband than he had been.

Let us now follow little Pen. He is an orphaned boy; his legacy, a baby sister and a few acres of land, worn out by long tilling.

The next morning but one after the funeral ceremonies were over, which marked the close of Leroy Pembrooke's life, little Pen was summoned into the little tucked-up parlor of his old home by his Aunt Zurilda.

The spinster was so upright and stiff that there was a

noticeable space between her back and the back of the chair ; her arms folded across her bony bosom ; her lips tightly drawn ; her eyebrows slightly elevated, causing many temporary wrinkles to add themselves to the army of permanent ones. She looked hard at the boy as he came in, and her every expression seemed to say, "I am a very important person, very indeed, and have been lawfully recognized as such, and now I must commence rightly." Accordingly she addressed the boy, and said in a rather brusque and snappish style :

"Pen, I am your guardian !"

"My what, aunt ?" the boy inquired.

"Guardian, your guardian ! Do ye hear ?"

Pen signified that he did, but his confused looks would have convinced any one but his Aunt Zurilda that he did not understand.

"I am," said the spinster, "going to bind you out. Do ye hear that ?"

Pen mumbled out that he did, and the spinster continued :

"Your father left mighty little property, not worth much, and it is mortgaged. Do ye hear ?"

Again the boy nodded an affirmative reply, although the whole conversation was Greek to him. His aunt was terrifying him by her stiffness, but he finally summoned courage enough to timidly ask:

"Will I go to school any more, aunt ?"

"Perhaps you will, boy, in the winter time," the spinster replied, "if you are not too smart, and don't get above your business ; but in the summer time you will work for your board and clothes. You have had entirely too much of this book and school business, leastways, in my opinion."

"After dinner," she continued, "I will take you to see your little sister, and to-morrow morning you will go away from Hampton and be put to work. Do ye hear ?"

It is highly probable that he did hear, and heard with sorrow.

It is hard to tell just how much longer this amiable spinster would have continued to lay down the law, had

not a vigorous rap sounded at the front door, which was quickly responded to by Aunt Zurilda with a "Come in," and a moment later a tall, slim, angular, big-footed, big-jointed individual stepped into the room; and as he did so his hat came off with military precision, which plainly told the spinster that the stranger knew he was in the presence of a woman far superior to the common herd of mortals.

"Have I the pleasure," said the newcomer, "of addressing Miss Goodsil?" He carefully emphasized the word "Miss."

The spinster dropped a courtesy, and faintly smiled as she answered affirmatively.

"Ah, this is an honor," said he, at the same time drawing forth a letter from his pocket, which he handed over to the now smiling spinster. And while she reads we will take a look at the stranger's face. It is slim, like his body; a very large mouth; a faint attempt at a mustache is discoverable on his lip, which adds to his already sandy complexion; short side whiskers, very like his mustache in color, and very dwarfed looking, while his nose is very prominent and aquiline and very high at the bridge, and then turned downward toward the face, as if it was determined not to turn up at anything in the wide world. The whole expression of his countenance seemed humorous and glowing, which expression was noticeably strengthened by his close-cut sandy hair.

The letter he had given to the spinster was an introductory one from a mutual city acquaintance, and, as the spinster's city friends were few, she prized them very highly, if for no other reason than because they were so easily counted; and she paid due deference to their opinions. A letter introducing such a very appreciative appearing individual, at once, and without further ceremony, commanded her greatest courtesy.

It may be well for us to explain that the spinster's city acquaintance had not only given the new comer an introductory letter, but had also given him a page of the spinster's early history, posting him on her poetic hobby. Accordingly, as soon as the spinster concluded reading

the letter, she extended her bony hand and said in her blandest tone :

"Mr. Willets, I welcome you to Hampton ;" and before Mr. Willets could reply, she turned to Pen, and bade him leave the room. Perhaps she did not want the boy to know what a smiling countenance she could wear, even when a congenial spirit flitted within the halo of her disc.

Pen withdrew ; and as the door closed, Mr. Edward Willet's mouth opened.

"Miss Goodsil," said he, "I thank you from the innermost recesses of my heart for this unlooked-for welcome."

She nodded and smiled, and he continued :

"Never before have I been so far West. I felt that I was coming to a land where the congenial meeting of poetic spirits was unknown. Alas ! how happily have I been disappointed since coming into this room."

"Ah ! Mr. Willets, how did you now that I doted so much on poetry ?—in fact, lived with my thoughts in a poetic world ?"

"My dear Miss Goodsil, if I may be permitted to address you in such familiar terms," (she was smiling her approval, and he continued), "there was a time when life to me was a happy May-day ; no storms, no clouds ; I was the household pet. Ah ! Miss Goodsil, I was the household treasure." Here he applied his handkerchief to his face, and continued :

"But that was a long time since, and its memory to me is as the faded rose. I lived in poetic muse ; but alas, that was long, long ago."

"Mr. Edward,—I beg pardon,—Mr. Willets, I should have said."

"Miss Goodsil," said Willets, "I cannot grant your pardon. Call me Edward, always Edward. If you only knew what hallowed associations it brings back of that rosy, rosy, rosy existence."

Here the handkerchief came in play again and prevented him from speaking further.

"Ah, Mr. Willets," said the spinster, "how much your experience is like my own. If I only had words to

express my feelings and explain to you how many I meet that are unpoetic, cold, and unappreciative people of the world."

"Don't, don't," interposed the inimitable Edward; "don't tell me of that which precipitated me from a lap of luxury out into a barren world. In those good old days I lived with the poets and basked in the sunshine of happiness."

The spinster had just nerved herself up to a reply, when the servant opened the door from the adjoining room, and, in a sonorous tone, said:

"Beg your pardon, miss. Lady wants to see you. Cannot wait a moment longer."

"Mr. Willets," said the spinster, "will you please excuse me for a moment, until I see what this unappreciative, unpoetic woman of the world wants?"

"My dear Miss Goodsil," said Willets, "don't mention it, don't mention it. I know the stern demands of duty, how they bring us in contact with the unsympathetic and unpoetic. Go on, Miss Goodsil, go on. You carry my deepest sympathy with you."

Miss Zurilda bowed as she smiled her happy approval of the inimitable's words.

"Well," observed Willets, as she withdrew, "this is deucedly pleasant; it is, by George! It's about time I struck her for board and lodging; that's what I came for. Mighty pleasant to run a bill with some one of a poetic nature. I know how to talk 'em down when pay-day comes and finances are low, as, unfortunately, they usually are with me. There was a time when it was different; then I had plenty of money and no debts. At the present writing the tables are slightly turned; now I have plenty of debts and no cash; but, fortunately, my debts don't bother me very much, neither do I complain of my lot. Wish I could say the same of my creditors; but they seem to be very much dissatisfied with the credit system."

Here Willets consulted his time-keeper, and observed that it was mighty near dinner time, and he hoped his name would be among the list of invited guests. At this point of his reverie Miss Goodsil returned, and as

she came into the room her face changed from its long-accustomed sour expression to one of smiles.

"Mr. Willets," she said, as she advanced toward him, "I am going to ask a favor of you, and you must not refuse me."

"My dear Miss Goodsil," said the Inimitable, "how can I refuse anything you request?"

"Ah," said the spinster, "you are so kind. The request I have to make is that you remain to dinner with us."

Willets' mouth almost watered as he hastily said:

"My dear Miss Goodsil, I can only repeat what I have just said; how can I refuse anything you request? And, by-the-by, Miss Goodsil," said he, "I had almost forgotten, so charmingly have I been entertained, to state the object of my visit."

"Mr. Willets," said the smiling spinster, "you compliment me too highly; you do, indeed."

"My dear lady," said Willets, "permit me to differ with you. You are a woman of great superiority; one who can appreciate, and one who should be appreciated. Little do you care for a cold, hard, practical world; little do you care for its filthy lucre, and, if I mistake not, the soul-enrapturing sentiments of a single poetic effusion has a greater charm for you than the jingling of silver and gold."

"Them's my feelings, Mr. Willets, indeed they are. How I wish I could express my feelings as you do."

"I must say," said Willets, "that you are rather calling the turn on me in the exuberance of your compliments. The object of my visit, Miss Goodsil, is to obtain board and lodging at your house, if, in asking, I am not presuming too much on your kindness. Of course, I shall expect to compensate you liberally. My only fear is, that you will refuse to accept from me sufficient funds, to reimburse you for the additional expense of having me in your family."

"Mr. Willets," said the spinster, "I was just thinking this morning that it might be well for me to look around and obtain a boarder. My home is quite common, as

you can plainly see, but such as it is you are welcome to at a dollar a week—"

Here Miss Zurilda was seized with a violent fit of sneezing that almost ruffed the calm of her poetic tranquillity. She had hardly recovered herself when the Inimitable Willets had the floor and was preparing to crown his former efforts with a master stroke of eloquence, but the spinster interrupted him, and continued:

"As I was saying, Mr. Willets, such as we have you are welcome to, at a dollar a week less than what they will charge you at the hotel."

"Hem! Just so," said Willets, a little bit disconcerted with the terms; "but, my dear Miss Goodsil," said he, "are you quite sure you can afford to make me such a liberal offer?"

"Quite sure, my dear Mr. Willets, and I beg of you not to refer to it again."

"Your wish, my charming Miss Goodsil, shall be complied with. Never again will I refer to the subject." And the inimitable Edward Willets kept his word to the letter.

"You have not informed me, Mr. Willets," said the spinster, "whether your coming to Hampton was a matter of pleasure or business."

"Business, my dear Miss Goodsil; business I am a sort of under-official of both lines of railways at this place."

"Indeed," ejaculated the spinster. "How pleasant."

"I find it so, I assure you," continued Willets.

"With this brain," said he, putting one big-jointed finger to his sandy-coated head, "I grasp, and with this hand record the electric sparks of intelligence, as they flash over the wires from far-off cities and diverse villages along the line. In short, my dear Miss Goodsil, I am by nature a gentleman; by birth and education a slave to the poetic muse; by sad experience an individual precipitated from a home where I once was the household pet—the household treasure—into a cold, unsympathetic, uncaring, unpoetic world; and by profes-

sion a telegraph operator; and have been officially assigned to the Hampton office as night official."

"I see, Mr. Willets, that you, like myself, are an important person. I beg you to excuse the word important when I use it in speaking of myself."

"Can't excuse you, my dear lady. It was highly appropriate and in perfect harmony with the eternal fitness of things," said the Inimitable.

"Well, to proceed," said the spinster, "I have lately, very lately, lost my sister, Mrs. Pembrooke, and to make the situation more trying and awkward, if such a thing could be, her husband died, too—only survived her a few short days and left in my care two children, one a smart little baby girl, to whom I have given my own name, Zurilda (and something tells me the little thing has a poetic soul of the highest type); the other child was the boy you saw in the room when you first came; and in him I can only see a repetition of the parent plant, his father—a cold, hard, calculating man of the world. I also have been appointed administratrix of the estate, and guardian of the two children."

At this juncture Aunt Zurilda paused from sheer exhaustion; and as Willets had had quite a recess, he was fresh with another burst of eloquence.

"My dear Miss Goodsil, I think I understand the situation. Your deceased brother-in-law was destitute of a poetic soul, and this lad, his son, is likewise destitute of that enobling attribute—a poetic inclination. Your deceased sister has left a charming infant girl, to whom you have given your name. Ah, what greater love could you show! This alone, to my mind, is conclusive evidence that she is destined to a bright future and will eventually develop into a poetic star of rare magnitude, the lustre of which may be dimmed somewhat by your own poetic presence. The law," continued he, "has appointed you to certain trusts. It is but a just recognition of your superior ability, and is in true poetic harmony with the eternal fitness of things."

A knock at the door prevented a reply to the Inimitable's flowery speech, and the servant announced that dinner was ready.

"How swiftly the morning has passed away," observed the spinster, as they left the little tucked up parlor and entered the dining room, where they found the cloth spread and dinner in readiness.

"Ah, Miss Goodsil, how swiftly the hours go by when congenial spirits meet. To me the morning has been like the rosy days of long ago, but their memory has long since faded from me like a receding echo."

Aunt Zurilda's smiling face plainly told Willets that his words were highly agreeable; but when she turned her eyes in a scrutinizing way toward the boy, the smile left it, and the rigid expression, so common to her, reappeared. She scanned Pen's nose and face to see if he had performed the necessary ablutions. He seemed to pass muster, and the dinner proceeded very pleasantly. Increasing interest manifested itself between Willets and the spinster as the conversation kept up during the dinner hour. At last they arose from the table, and Mr. Edward Willets took his departure, with the understanding that he would become Miss Zurilda's boarder the following day.

Immediately after Willets' departure Aunt Zurilda and Pen started for Mrs. Brinkerhoff's. That kind lady had cared for Pen's infant sister since their mother's death. The spinster's thoughts were full of Mr. Edward Willets, and she concluded to ask Pen how he liked the gentlemen who had dined with them. In reply the boy unconsciously raised his aunt's indignation by saying he thought the man talked too much at the table. He had no sooner made the remark than he felt two bony hands grasp his shoulders, and he was forthwith given a vigorous shaking up.

"What do you mean?" cried his aunt, "by speaking so disrespectful of one of the finest gentlemen who ever came to Hampton? He is a gentleman; a perfect gentleman! Do ye hear?"

"I do hear, aunt," said Pen, as his eyes filled with tears, "but I had no idea he was such a nice gentleman or I would not have said what I did."

"What are you crying about?" said his aunt, very sternly.

"I wish," said he, between his sobs, "that you would not be so cross to me, and would let me go to school."

"Ha! I see what you are up to. I understand your dodge, but it won't work, if I know myself, and I think I do. Your father and mother always did baby you mighty near to death, and spoiled you almost completely, and it is me, your Aunt Zurilda, who has got to look after you and your little sister from now on."

By this time they were at Mrs. Brinkerhoff's. The spinster never paused until she was well into the house, and then turned with military tread, "right wheel," and stood face to face with kind, motherly Mrs. Brinkerhoff, whose good-natured smile was the first sunshine that had fallen on Pen since his parents death.

"You wanted to see your little sister, did you not?" said she. Pen answered that he did, and forthwith the shawls were drawn aside from the bundle on her lap, and there lay his tiny, baby sister.

Pen bent down and kissed his little sister affectionately, and said:

"I wish to name her Bertha."

"You wish what?" said his aunt with some surprise, and with a tone of decided severity in her voice.

"He said," interposed good, kind Mrs. Brinkerhoff, "that he would like to name her Bertha."

"Bertha!" exclaimed his aunt, "whatever put that into the boy's head? He is just like his father,—wholly destitute of poetic soul. I have already," she continued, "selected the name Zurilda for the child, having given her my own name. What more could I do?"

This last interogatory was addressed to Mrs. Brinkerhoff, who in reply said that Bertha Zurilda would be a very pretty name for the child, and she said it in such a diplomatic tone that the spinster concluded to argue the case no further; and so it was then and there settled that Bertha Zurilda should be the child's name.

Soon after this they took their departure, and returned home. The evening wore quickly away; and soon after supper Pen withdrew to his little bed-room for his last night's sleep at his old home.

The day had been warm and sultry, but toward even-

ing, black, lowering clouds overcast the heavens, and the wind began blowing a regular gale. He drew his chair to the low window to look out. It was growing very dark, and the wind seemed desperate as it shook the very sides of the house; an occasional mutter of thunder greeted his ears above the confusion made by the wind. Then the heavens would light up ever and anon, and at such times he could plainly see the two great oaks that stood near the window. They seemed angry or deeply grieved, and bent their huge tops to one another until their limbs would intermingle and strip the leaves from off their swinging branches. They seemed to be whispering to one another; planning some revenge or lamenting some great sorrow. Then the wind would dwindle its fury away until not a breath seemed moving; and at such times these two great trees stood motionless and still like sentinels in repose.

Suddenly the wind came on again with greater violence than before, and these two monster trees fell into a wrathful fury, tossing and throwing their great arms of limbs up and down, swaying to and fro, and bending together like two great giants grappling in mortal strife. It made Pen shudder to look at them, so he drew the curtain down and sought his pillow, fancying as he did so that the trees were not angry, but were writhing in pain and grief because they had been spared to witness his own great sorrow. He listened to the torrents of rain beating against his window until he fell asleep.

When he awoke next morning the sun was trying to shine in his room. He raised the curtain, and its broad, warm rays shone in. It was a beautiful morning. The birds were singing gaily, and a fox-squirrel was chirping and barking from his perch far up amid the branches of one of the oaks that had been so violent the night before.

CHAPTER III.

PEN LEAVES HOME.

THE promise made by Aunt Zurilda to Pen, that he should be bound out, was carried into effect. The papers had all been signed, and Pen was put into the stage coach, the same old vehicle that years before had brought his mother to Hampton.

Orders were given to the driver to set him down at the Mills, some twenty miles away, where the farmer, a Mr. McGuffin, was to meet him.

It so happened that the inimitable Mr. Willets concluded to take a short trip into the country by the morning stage, and walk back. No doubt it was with a view of communing with the solemn grandeur of the deep wild woods, where he could feast his overflowing poetic soul on the sweet odors of the growing flowers and the leafy trees.

Lin Brinkerhoff was at the stage office when Pen took his leave, and he seemed really sorry to part with his old playmate.

Aunt Zurilda's parting words were an admonition to Pen "not to be too smart, and get above his business. Do ye hear?" she inquired.

Pen said he did, while the tears flowed thick and fast down his cheeks.

The spinster then turned to Mr. Willets, whom she had not seen since breakfast, and, with her sweetest smile, said:

"My dear Mr. Willets, this is one of my sacred duties I owe to the memory of my deceased sister. If the boy only had a spark, a single spark, in his whole being of poetic life, how different would I feel at this parting; but no, he is prosy, practical, and wholly destitute of those higher and finer attributes of the soul."

The Inimitable had just brought his right hand up and was measuring off, with his big-jointed index finger, the concluding remarks of the spinster preparatory to a

burst of eloquence, when the stage driver shouted out, "All aboard!" and Willets had only time to say, "Ah, Miss Goodsil, 'tis true, 'tis true, 'tis a pity 'tis true." Even this was said over his shoulder, as he clung on behind the stage. The spinster thought she heard him say something about "The memory of it, to him, would be as the faded rose," but she was not certain, and wrestled with indecision on this point all the way back to the cottage, never bestowing a single thought on Pen.

Willets swung inside the coach, and found Pen and himself to be the only occupants.

"Come, my boy," said Willets, "cheer up; you must not be downhearted and give way to the mellowing influence of tears."

"I can't help it," he sobbed, "my aunt never said good-by, or seemed to care whether she ever saw me again or not."

"Let me see," said the Inimitable, "your name is Pembrooke?"

"Yes, sir," said the boy, "Penfield Pembrooke, but they call me Pen, for short."

"Where was your father from, Pen, my boy, if I may be permitted to address you on such familiar terms, and ask such pointed questions."

"I know," said Pen, who had now in a measure ceased his sobbing, "but I must not tell."

"What!" said Willets, "a mystery, is it a mystery? Look here, my young, congenial companion, tell me—is it a mystery?"

"Yes, sir, it is," said Pen, "my father told me lots of things that I am never to tell to anybody; not just yet, anyway."

"My little man," said Willets, "come here to me. There, sit on my lap and you will not be shook up. Pen, my dear boy, I like you. There is something about you that reminds me of my own rosy existence before I ceased to be the pet of a loving household. Now I dare say, Pen, you was your father's pet, wasn't you?"

"Yes, sir, and my poor mamma's too," said he, and his lips commenced quivering as he thought of the last time he saw his fond mother.

"Don't, don't, cry, my boy, don't. It is wholly contrary to the harmony of the eternal fitness of things. Now, my boy, I am from a New England State myself, and I know of a family there by the name of Pembrooke."

The boy looked up quickly with a flushed face.

"Yes, I know them, and what's more, I know pretty Kitty Pembrooke. In short, my dear youthful companion, she it is above all others who wields my destiny in her every look and word. You understand me, Pen, my boy; I am desperately and unreclaimedly in love with——"

"With Kitty Pembrooke?" said Pen.

"Bless your young heart, no," said the Inimitable. "Not with Kitty Pembrooke, but with her friend and companion, Cinderilla Tobias. Now, Cinderilla loves, worships, and idolizes me, but unless I can gain the favor of her charming friend, Kitty Pembrooke, I am simply miserable. In short, my name is Dennis, and although the goose is cooked, yet the eating of it will be for somebody else, unless I make my point. But Pen, before you speak—I see you are about to—let me tell you how I feel. When I swung onto the stage at Hampton this morning I would gladly have sold out all my stock in Cinderilla Tobias at a devil of a sacrifice—say one cent on the dollar. Supposing now that originally I had ten dollars of paid-up stock, and I am pretty sure the ice creams, candies, nuts and fruit that I have lavished on Cinderilla would, beyond a question, justify me in saying that I had at least ten dollars of paid-up stock, all milk and no water. Now this morning, as I before observed, I would have been glad to have disposed of my stock at one cent on the dollar, which would make ten cents, two nickels, or a dime; but since I have talked with you and taken into consideration the Pembrooke part of the business, and the mystery to which you hold the key, why my hopes spontaneously go up and with them my stock in Cinderilla Tobias. At this instant, Pen, I would not sell out for less than one hundred cents on the dollar. Now, my boy, what were you going to observe?"

"I never heard," said Pen, "of any one by the name of Kitty Pembrooke."

"Never, did you say?" said the Inimitable, with the most forlorn and dejected air that mortal man ever wore.

"Never, no, sir, never," said Pen.

"Then," observed Willets, "down again goes my hopes and likewise down goes the stock. Ah! fleeting hope, how at times you stimulate, but when the prop is removed, what an all-gone sensation creeps about my fluttering heart.

"There was a time, my youthful companion, when none of this was my lot, but it was long ago, the memory of which is very touching indeed to the bundles of nerves in my make up."

"Mr. Willets," said Pen, "I want you to promise me that you will not mention to any one that I told you I was in possession of facts which were communicated to me by father, that no one else knows of; especially do I want you to be guarded with my aunt."

"My dearest youth and companion, I give the promise, and so much of your secret as you have confided to me is buried deep in this bosom; so deep that there is no known process among men or nations that can ever extricate it."

"Thank you, Mr. Willets."

"Don't mention it, my youthful companion, I beg of you, don't mention it."

"My father did tell me," said Pen, "that there was a young lady in the Pembrooke family, who at this time must be about twenty years old, by the name of Katie."

"Katie, Katie, did you say?" exclaimed the Inimitable. "Then up goes my hopes and up goes my stock in charming Cinderilla Tobias. Katie and Kitty are one and the same. Katie is a nick name of Catherine, and Kittie is Kate in a petrified form. My dear Pen, I know this. I was once a pet myself; then it was charming Eddie, which is a petrified form of Edward but those rosy poetic days have long since past. My dear Pen, excuse me for doing most of the talking, but I must ask you a single question, which of course you are at liberty to

answer or rule out of order: Why do you not go to your kith and kin, who would undoubtedly be more appreciative and more considerate for your welfare, and when there you might be able, to put in a good word for your friend, till death, Edward Willets, Esq. Why you don't do this, Pen, I admit I am so deucedly stupid as not to understand."

"You know," said Pen, "it takes money to travel, and money I haven't got."

"Money, did you say?" observed the Inimitable, as he drew from his breeches pocket a shrunken, shriveled looking purse, and extricated with thumb and finger a twenty-dollar bank note, "there take that my dearest Pen. It is of no value to me—I have come near breaking it a half a dozen times in the past fortnight, but I have saved it to pay my board. But why I should have done such an unnatural thing I don't know. I never saved a cent before to pay board with; and as to my breaking a bill, it is always disastrous in the extreme, especially to the bill; for the moment it is broken the pieces disappear like licks of salt in a cattle yard."

"But I cannot pay you back, Mr. Willets, for a long time."

"My dear Pen, you can do it very easily by just saying a good word to Kittie Pembrooke for Edward Willets, Esq. Let me see—that makes thirty dollars of stock, all told, in Cinderilla Tobias. Its worth a dollar-five, and no capitalist, corporation or money-monger can get it for a cent less."

Five miles of the journey had now been made and the driver drew up his horses to give them water, and while they were drinking the Inimitable and little Pen shook hands, and promised ever after to be bosom friends. Indeed, when the stage started on again, Pen felt that he was parting with a sincere friend. He felt proud of the attention and kindness that Willets had shown him, and he determined to do his utmost to reciprocate in the way Willets desired.

The next five miles were far more tedious to the young traveler, and seemed so much longer, but at last they wore away, and the stage drew up at a little wooden

tavern, which seemed the principal building in the inland village consisting of not more than a dozen houses all told. The horses were speedily put up, and dinner was announced. Pen was given a place by a good natured, fat lady, who seemed to be the landlady, as she made it her special duty to seat all incoming guests and see that they were properly cared for.

Just opposite Pen sat a lady and a little girl. The lady was, perhaps, forty years old, and very neatly dressed, yet she had such a good, kind, considerate appearance, that Pen felt perfectly at ease in her presence.

The little girl at her side, who undoubtedly was her child, was a blonde and very handsome. She was, perhaps, ten years old, and Pen thought that she was the prettiest little girl he had ever seen. Her beauty was in no one feature of the face, nor her ladylike deportment in no one act or gesture; nothing was over done, yet all was finished and complete.

Dinner being over, Pen was highly pleased to learn that the lady and child would be fellow-travelers in the coach, and that soon after they were going on through a woody country.

"How far are you going, my little man?" inquired the lady of Pen.

"I'm going to the Mills," he replied.

"Do you live there?"

"No, ma'am. I did live at Hampton, but my papa and mamma both died, and now I am going out to work," said Pen, and when he finished speaking, two great tears were trickling down his cheeks.

The lady bent forward, and with her own handkerchief wiped the tears away, and, kissing him on the forehead, bade him cry no more, but tell her whom he was going to work for—what kind of work he was going to do.

"I am going," said Pen, "to work for a Mr. McGuffin on the farm."

"We live on the farm, don't we, mamma?" said the little girl.

"Yes, my child," said the lady, as she smoothed back the tresses of hair from the child's handsome face.

Then, turning again to Pen, she asked, "What is your name?"

"Penfield Pembrooke," he replied. "They call me Pen for short."

"Pembrooke?" repeated the lady. "What was your father's name?"

"Leroy Pembrooke," said Pen, who, though young as he was in years, was somewhat startled at the color as it came and went from the lady's face.

"Did you know him?" inquired Pen.

"Don't ask me, child," she said, and turned away her face.

Pen climbed up on the seat and tried to look out of the window, but his eyes would keep coming back to the lady's face, and the more he looked the more he thought he could see traces of past affliction and grief, but they seemed to bear a date of long ago, and succeeding years had smothered out in part the furrows that will come when affliction and grief are our companions. They cut deep notches on the brows of the children of men, and wear away the elasticity of the heart, and cause hope to wither and die.

Ah, remorseless companions, indeed, are affliction and grief—"They make young men old and wrinkled in a single day, and in a single night turn the jetty hair to hoary gray."

At last the lady turned to Pen and said; "Come to my side, child. I would not," she observed with some emotion, "have you think that I am cold and unfeeling. Indeed, my heart bleeds to think of you going out into the world to battle alone with the evils and temptations that surround you, without the protecting influence of a mother's love. I wish you lived near me; I would be a mother to you, but my home is many miles from here. If my husband, Mr. Baine, were here, he might take you with us. I will surely tell him of you, and may be he will stop at the Mills and hunt you up, sometime in the near future.

"Here is a Bible my daughter was taking to her brother; I will ask her to give it to you." She turned to the child and said:

"Lillie, my daughter, come here."

The little girl came and stood beside Pen while the mother said: "Lillie, my child, this little boy has no home, no father, no mother, and is now on his way to live among strangers. Do you not want to give him this Bible? I can get another for you to give to brother."

She took the book from her mother, and placed it in Pen's hand.

"Read it and obey it," she said, "and you will be a good man like my papa."

"Thank you," said Pen, while great tears were coursing down his cheeks, almost blinding him.

"Wait," said the mother, "I will take my pencil and write something in the book."

When she had finished she read it, as follows:

"Presented to Penfield Pembrooke by Lillie Baine."

The little girl then withdrew and again busied herself looking out of the coach window.

"You asked me," said Mrs. Baine, "if I knew your father?"

"Yes, lady," said Pen eagerly. "Did you know him?"

"I did know your father years ago, and he did our family a great injury, made himself an outcast, and threw a shadow over the bright hopes of my twin sister. I do not refer to this to explain any of the circumstances to you, but only to teach you a lesson of forgiveness. I fully believe your father repented. I know my sister forgave him, and if she could, surely I can. I little thought the last time I saw him, that so many years would pass by without ever seeing or hearing of him, and you must not think strange if I was a little startled to learn that you are his child. I claim to be a Christian woman, my child, and I am trying to do by all my fellow creatures as a Christian woman should.

"Although you are the child of a man whose conduct brought many wrinkles on my brow and many more on the brow of my now angel sister, yet I think not of that, but think rather of how I can best impress you with the divine teachings of the Holy Bible, and how I can best throw a mantle and guard around you to protect you from temptation and sin."

"Mrs. Baine," said Pen, "my mamma used to talk to me just as you are talking now, and I promised her, and now I will promise you, that I will do my best to shun all evil and I will also try to be as forgiving toward the sins and shortcomings of my associates, as you have this day been to the memory of my poor, dear papa."

"Nobly said, my little man," exclaimed Mrs. Baine.

"What place is this, mamma?" inquired Lillie.

"It must be the Mills," she replied.

And sure enough it was the Mills, and there was a burly-looking man taking down Pen's box.

"Well, I will have to get out here," said Pen, turning to Mrs. Baine and extending his hand. "Good-by, Mrs. Baine."

"Good-by, my child," she responded, and bending down, she embraced him tenderly and bade him God speed.

He then turned to Lillie, who took his offered hand and said farewell.

The old stage was soon moving on and Pen was with his new master, Mr. McGuffin, who was a short, stout-built man. His face was covered over with a shaggy beard and he talked as gruffly as he looked.

It was late at night when Mr. McGuffin's home was reached. His wife was waiting for him and had the cloth spread and a lunch in readiness.

Pen's long ride had shaken him up considerably and sharpened his appetite, so he ate a hearty supper. When he had finished, Mr. McGuffin observed that if Pen would work as keen as his appetite seemed to indicate, he would do quite a man's work.

Pen made no reply, but waited until he was shown to his room, which was on the garret floor.

A little sickly-looking bunk was in one corner, a three-legged stand near it and an old-fashioned chair, with its back broken off. These, and just three hooks on which to hang his clothing, constituted the furniture of his room.

As soon as he was alone he drew the chair carefully to the stand and opened the Bible that Lillie Baine had

given him, and commenced reading softly to himself, every now and then stopping to spell by syllables the long, hard words, and then going on again.

The tallow candle burned low and dim until he could hardly see: then he would turn and snuff the wick and it would burn up brightly for a moment. The wind, hopever, from openings in the wall would make the light flicker so unsteadily that he could hardly see.

Great tears would come to his eyes and course their way down his pale cheeks, but he would brush them hastily away. They were not caused so much from the wind as from his loneliness of heart; but if you should have asked him why the tears came, he would have told you it was only the wind.

CHAPTER IV.

A WELL LAID SCHEME THWARTED. OLD HINCHEY INTRODUCED.

ALTHOUGH Pen had been duly articled to farmer McGuffin, yet no money had been paid to Aunt Zurilda, who by the way, was getting rather low in finances, caused mainly by her expecting and not yet receiving any funds from the Inimitable for his board and lodging.

True, she had not asked him for funds, although she had been on the point of doing so a great many times; but as often as she got ready to speak to him about it, just so often would he branch off into one of his poetic, soul touching speeches, and with such a suavity of manner that she could not think of breaking the spell of the poetic muse by referring to anything so mercenary as money.

Thus day after day passed by, and finally a bright idea presented itself to her. She would write to Mr. McGuffin. That's what she would do.

Pen had been with the farmer about a month when she first thought of this, so suiting the action to the

thought, the spinster seated herself at the writing desk and wrote as follows:

"HAMPTON, July 25th, 18—.

"Mr. C. McGuffin,

My Dear Sir:—My nephew, Penfield Pembrooke, has now been with you about one month, and according to the terms of the article he has yet four months to remain. I write to ask if he pleases you, and, if he does, would you object to sending me the price of the article, which at Three Dollars per month would be Fifteen Dollars for the whole five months. I assure you, Mr. McGuffin, I would not write you making such a request if I were not sorely pressed for funds. Hoping you will take no offense at what I ask, and that you can and will grant my request, I am,

Most sincerely yours,
Miss Zurilda Goodsil."

"There," said the spinster, when she had finished, "I think that will bring it, unless the boy has been too smart and got above his business. Oh, that the boy had an appreciative poetic turn of mind!"

When this letter reached the Mills it was no sooner put in the "M." box at the little dingy post-office than a gruff voice called out to the postmaster:

"Anything here for me?"

The aged gentleman addressed looked hard at the speaker through his dusty glasses, but not being able to see who it was, bent his head forward, elevated his eyes, and looked over the rim of his spectacles.

"Ah, and it's Mister McGuffin that's askin'? Sure, sir, an' I wasn't afther knowin' yer voice though I've heerd it these many years."

"Yes, Tim, it's me," replied McGuffin, "and I'm deucedly near played out; drove forty miles last night, and have got to go on over to the next town yet afore I can go home."

"Forty moiles was yes afther sayin'? Sure, Mr. McGuffin, ye'll be the death of yerself yet. Now,

where in the woide world could yes have been drivin' forty moiles to, I want to know ?" inquired Tim.

"Oh, I was after another load of goods to supply you chaps that sells 'em," said McGuffin ; "and I will be glad," he continued, "when we get a railroad through these parts, and then I won't have to kill myself workin' so devilish hard."

"Now, why in the divil, Mr. McGuffin, didn't yes be afther tellin' on me that yes goin' after a load, and I would sure given yes an ordher," said Tim.

"What kind of goods do you want ?" asked McGuffin, rather gruffly.

"Well, yes know that I was afther wantin' some pocket knives and some revolvers and such loike. When yes brought yer last load over, a month since," said Tim, "and, bedad," he continued, "it's now good two months since I sold the last knife in me sthore, an' what the devil is a mon to do, sure, in me business with nothin' to sell ?"

"Never mind, Tim," said McGuffin, with a careless indifference, "I'll drive my wagon around to your back door, and maybe I've got what you want."

"Ah, Mr. McGuffin," said Tim, "ye's a man afther me own heart. But hould on, Mr. McGuffin, hould on a minute ; here's the letther yes afther askin' for."

Mr. McGuffin had started out to drive his wagon around, but now came back and received the letter from old Tim Mannahan's hand, and then hurried out again to get his goods around at Tim's back door and exhibit them.

Mr. C. McGuffin was a very enterprising sort of a man, and very prosperous.

Some twelve years before the time at which we write he had settled on a small tract of land near the Mills, and year by year had added acre after acre to his first possessions, until now he was reputed to be the wealthiest man in all that part of the country. He owned over a thousand acres of the best land, and it was stocked with large herds of cattle, but he still worked just as hard as ever. He always kept his own counsel, and was more ambitious than ever to own the land that adjoined his own.

His remarkable success was quite phenomenal. He always had plenty of money, never make a debt, and always paid cash for what he bought. His own wife was afraid of him, knew nothing of his business, and was his slave, while his children trembled with fear at the sound of his gruff voice, and cowed like whipped curs at his glance. It was to such a home as this that Aunt Zurilda had consigned Pen in the discharge of her duty to the sacred memory of her sister.

Mr. McGuffin was not long in getting his mud-besplashed vehicle around to the back door of Tim Mannahan's store building, and soon the goods were being inspected. The result of the inspection was that the postmaster purchased quite a bill.

Occasionally a difference of opinion would arise wherein Mr. McGuffin would insist on so many dollars and a half, and Tim would contend for so many dollars and a quarther. At last they were through. Mr. McGuffin went inside to settle and receive payment, also to purchase a post-office order for fifteen dollars to send to Miss Zurilda Goodsil. Not that anything she said in her letter moved him to respond, or that he cared a fig for her pressed circumstances, but here was an opportunity to display his promptness, and also show the spinster that C. McGuffin, Esq., always had money. Moreover, the boy suited him; did his work well, and was faithful.

To be sure the said C. McGuffin, Esq., had, during the month past, at divers times and without cause, cursed and swore at the boy until the very atmosphere was blue, but this was only done as a sort of preventive, to keep the lad from growing careless. Then again he reasoned with himself: "If I send the pay for the whole five months I will have it done with, and the boy will have no alternative but to stay and work it out." The money, therefore, was sent to Aunt Zurilda.

Mr. McGuffin, having finished his business at the mills, pushed on to another inland village to close out his stock. It was considerably past noon when he reached his home.

"Hello!" he shouted, and his wife came to the door like magic.

"Where is Pen?" he inquired. "Tell the little scapegrace of a hireling to hie his bones out here and put up this team, and do it devilish sudden, too."

"Why, didn't Pen go with you last night?" timidly inquired Mrs. McGuffin.

"No, he didn't," thundered C. McGuffin, Esq.

"Well, he hasn't been seen since you went away last night after dark."

"What?" cried the now astonished McGuffin, "isn't he here?"

"No," replied his wife, "he has gone."

"Damme," said the phenomenal C. McGuffin, Esq., "so is my fifteen dollars gone. Well, where is Tobs?"

"'Ere Hi his, sir," said a voice on the other side of the wagon.

"Put up this team, Tobs, and do it mighty spry. By the way, Tobs, have you any idea where that cussed boy has gone?"

"Well, I 'ave my hown hidea," responded the descendant of Great Britain.

"Well, what's your idea?" inquired McGuffin.

"I think, sir," said methodical Tobs, "you 'ad better change your boots, clothes and 'at for clane ones, and heat your dinner, and I will care for the 'orses; after that, you kno, we can talk about that hunappreciative boy."

"Very well, Tobs; go ahead and put the horses out and rub them down well, for they have had a long drive, and I will change my clothes and eat my d'inner."

"I will look hafter the 'orses all right, you know," said Tobs, who seemed determined to have the last word.

Tobs, as he was called, was an Englishman, who had been in Mr. McGuffin's service for a dozen years. In fact, he had been associated with his employer ever since he came over from England. When Mr. George Tobias, or Tobs, as he was now nick-named, came from England, he was a dashing young man with plenty of money. He met McGuffin, who seemed to be such a sociable sort of a chap, that soon Tobs and he were great friends.

Tobs had a weakness for the social glass, and before

he had been in McGuffin's company a fortnight they had both been beastly intoxicated a half-dozen times. One morning when Tobs awoke from a drunken stupor, and after much shaking and coaxing had roused McGuffin, and while the latter was shaking off the stupor, Tobs found to his unspeakable horror that he had been robbed of every shilling he had. As soon as McGuffin learned the unhappy condition of his friend, he instituted a strict search and found that he, too, had been robbed. They quit drinking after this, and destitute Tobs was given a home with McGuffin, and the latter gentleman soon began to prosper. Perhaps it was because he gave up the use of spirituous liquors.

Tobs gradually became, like everything else around McGuffin, an inferior. It seemed quite natural for the Englishman to prefix a "Mister" to McGuffin's name, and it gradually grew to be equally natural for McGuffin to nick-name the English gentleman "Tobs." So for years it had been Mister McGuffin on the one hand and Tobs on the other.

During these years Tobs had seen a great many things in his employer that wore a decidedly suspicious look, and after a while he said to himself, "Who knows, by George, but what McGuffin was playing hit honto me that time Hi lost my money? Maybe he wasn't so 'einously drunk as Hi thought, you know."

Years passed on, and still Tobs waited and patiently toiled, and his suspicions that McGuffin was the robber who despoiled him of his possessions became a fixed belief in his mind.

He knew, yet could not prove, that his employer came in possession of many things in a very mysterious and, he believed, dishonest manner, and he determined to put C. McGuffin, Esq., in his power if possible.

When Pen came to work on the farm, Tobs took a great liking to him, and before he had been in the house a week Tobs, every evening, would creep up to his room, and either converse softly with the boy, or listen while Pen read from his Bible.

It was a pleasant sight to see Pen, a child of scarce a dozen years, and Tobs, a man of over forty, together,

one reading and the other listening to the divine truths and teachings of the holy Bible.

In no one else had Tobs ever felt like confiding, but he took such a genuine fancy to Pen that he told him his story, and his suspicions that McGuffin was the thief, and more, that he believed C. McGuffin, Esq., "was and 'ad been following up 'is thieving hacts hever since; that about once a month he would 'ave 'is best team of 'orses brought hout just hat nightfall, and off 'e would go han not come 'ome till late next day, hand the 'orses hair ne'er brushed, you know, when 'e comes 'ome."

"Why don't you follow him?" said Pen, "and find out for a certainty if he is stealing, and then you could have him punished."

"Well, Hi will tell you," said Tobs. "Hi 'ave thought hov that, but hif Hi should follow 'im and find nothing out, why, what the devil would Hi do, you know, as Hi 'ave no other 'ome?"

"If I could help you, Tobs," said Pen, "I would gladly do it, but I don't see any way that I can; and now I will confide something to you, but you must promise me that you will never tell."

"Hi never will, hif Hi should live to be an 'undred years hold," said Tobs.

"I am a going to run away from this place," said Pen, "and go to some relatives I have. They don't know me, but I know of them."

"Look here, Pen," said Tobs, "you must wait awhile afore you go han see hif you can't 'elp me. Hi sort of think you can, you know."

"In what way, Tobs," inquired Pen, "can I help you?"

Just what Hi was going to tell you," replied Tobs. "Now I know that this is han 'einous place, deucedly 'einous; but if you will consent to follow McGuffin the next time he takes a trip with his best 'orses, Hi will fix hit so you can keep hup with 'im, an' we will find hout what the hold chap his hup to, an' if 'e's a thieving, you know, why Hi will say Hi knew it all along, han' just come right down on 'im, han' if he don't pay me back my three thousand dollars an' hinterest, why George

Tobias, Esq., will everlastingly play the devil, you know, with C. McGuffin, Esq."

"There is my hand, Tobs, and I promise to go. If he is up to any meanness, we will find it out and have him severely punished for it; and, more, we will make him do as you said,—pay you back your money."

So it was agreed between Pen and Tobs that McGuffin should be closely watched and followed.

Tobs soon after this agreement constructed a box, which he kept in the wagon shed. It was so constructed that he could fasten it on the under side of the wagon, and was just large enough for Pen to crawl into. The back part was left entirely open, so that he could easily slip out whenever the wagon stopped, if he wished to.

After Pen had been at the farmer's for about a month, Tobs, at the supper table one evening, trampled Pen's toes unmercifully, it being the signal that the time had come.

Just as the shade of night was closing in, Tobs brought out his master's special team and hitched them to his best wagon.

Pen was stowed away in the small box, and Tobs had only time to say to him, "Now, 'old tight and not fall hout."

When C. McGuffin, Esq., came upon the scene, he sprang lightly into the seat and drew up the lines, ordering Tobs to open the gate and "be thunder'n' swift about it."

The gate swung open and the phenomenal McGuffin, wholly unconscious of the precious load he was drawing, drove out and away into the darkness.

On, on the wagon went; up steep hills, down descents, over bridges and through deep woods at a lively pace.

Pen was so shaken up that every bone in his body seemed ready to fall to pieces.

After about three hours of rapid travel the team was slackened down to a walk. The main road was then left, and the driver headed the somewhat jaded horses down an old by-road, and finally stopped.

A voice, in a low, deep tone, said: "Hello, Mc., on time as usual."

"It seems I am here," was McGuffin's gruff reply, as he climbed down from the wagon.

"Now," continued he, in the same compressed gruff voice, "you two chaps put your deadeners on the wheels."

Forthwith each wheel was provided with a lint fabric that would wholly deaden the noise, even in the roughest roads.

As soon as this was done McGuffin spoke again.

"Well, men, what have you got?"

"Come in to the cave, my brother, and see," said one of the men, and the same voice addressed his companion, saying: "Dick, you'd better keep a watch on the team and a look out, while I go with my good brother into the cave."

They were not gone long. As they returned Pen heard McGuffin say, "Well, you have the things boxed and ready, and I will drive down through the village and see what I can see."

Accordingly the horses were headed about, and down into the village they drove, as silently as a canoe on the waters.

Pen was on the look-out, and at once recognized the village as Hampton.

The wagon stopped in front of Mr. Ford's store, and in a moment's time C. McGuffin, Esq., had two good sized grind-stones laid carefully in his wagon and was driving on.

When he got to the lower part of the village he turned around and started back, but before he went far he stopped again, and, getting out, proceeded to open the bars of some poor family's cow-yard. The yard was small, and Pen could see a large fat cow lying down, ruminating and breathing loudly after the fashion of cattle kind.

The phenomenal McGuffin threw a lick of salt to her, which wholly put the brute off her guard; then slipping a noose around her neck, he soon had the animal hitched behind the wagon.

From here he drove slowly back to where he left his two pals, who were none other than old Hinchey, the king thief of the Ohio River, and his right-hand pal, Dick Dare, whose headquarters were promiscuously distributed in all the larger cities along the Ohio River.

McGuffin seemed anxious to hurry on home. Very little time was, therefore, spent either in loading the boxes of goods or settling for them.

There seemed to be a little misunderstanding as to when they would meet again, but the time was finally agreed upon, and the Phenomenal turned his horses homeward.

Pen could not think of riding all the way back, and as this was Hampton, he would go and see Willets, who was his sincere friend, and have C. McGuffin, Esq., arrested before he got home.

Accordingly, after old Hinchey and Dare were left a short distance behind, Pen swung down from his box, and, dropping flat on the ground, waited for the wagon to drive a little way before he should get up.

He finally straightened himself up and had advanced but a few steps when a hand was laid heavily on his shoulder, and a deep, guttural voice whispered in his ear :

"I guess not, my dear young man; I guess you'd better stay with old Hinchey."

CHAPTER V.

LIN BRINKERHOFF BECOMES A STUDENT OF TELEGRAPHY.

WE will leave Pen for a time with old Hinchey, the notorious vagabond and thief, and return to scenes that are being enacted at Hampton.

Just at the lower edge of the village stands a little dingy, red-painted building, with a roof much too large to be in keeping with its dimensions otherwise.

It is the depot-building for both lines of railways. Rather an unpretentious affair, yet wholly in keeping with the village.

The train from St. Louis, going east, passed through Hampton at twelve o'clock in the day time, and the train from the east, going west, passed through at twelve o'clock at night ; both the trains were usually on time, while the trains to and from Chicago, on the other road, were usually behind time.

From seven o'clock in the evening to seven o'clock in the morning, Edward Willets, the Inimitable, held forth at this place as night operator, also attending to the checking and transferring of all baggage. But there was very little of this sort of work to do, while his telegraphic labors consisted of taking a few train orders and reporting the arrival and departure of the few trains that ran.

The balance of his time he employed either sleeping or writing poetic effusions for the spinster's perusal and edification.

His one great fault was to be always out of money and always in debt. He had other faults, but they were trivial compared with this.

He could fall desperately in love at the least provocation, and just as easily fall out again, and he seemed none the worse for the wear.

He could talk of poetry and even write some tame effusions, if it was to his interest to do so. He could as easily and with fully as much fluency, talk of religion and politics ; but in reality he knew very little poetry, very little religion, and very little politics, but had a smattering of all, a little of everything, yet was not absolutely positive about anything. He was one of those happy persons who are very susceptible to impressions and are contented with those impressions, never troubling himself about the why and wherefore. In short, he was one of those malleable and adaptable individuals who can bend themselves and be bent to the surroundings of any station in life, without asking a single question.

Within three months after his arrival he knew every

man, woman and child in the village of Hampton, and had the reputation of being a remarkably smart man. During these three months of his sojourn he had kept his word with Aunt Zurilda, and never referred to the subject of board or board-bill, directly or indirectly.

Because of this, and because he was paying considerable attention to giggling girls, which the spinster said was unbecoming to a man of his poetic taste, he had fallen somewhat in her estimation. Notwithstanding even this, it is highly presumable that the spinster actually entertained thoughts of binding her own poetic taste with the Inimitable's in matrimonial attachment, should he ever offer himself a living sacrifice at her feet.

But as yet he had made no declaration of love to her, although she could remember an innumerable number of times when he came so near, oh ! so near.

Thus she existed from day to day in poetic hope and trust, and the Inimitable Edward existed from day to day in poetic doubt and debt, and each sinking and sinking deeper and deeper with the rising and setting of the morning and evening sun. One evening Lin Brinkerhoff came into the depot alone, and the Inimitable invited him to step into the operator's room, which invitation he readily accepted, for he had a business proposition to make to Mr. Willets as soon as an opportunity presented itself.

"Let me see," said Willets, "your name is Brinkerhoff,—Lin Brinkerhoff, I believe."

"Yes, sir, it is," said Lin, in his usual bold voice.

"Now," continued the Inimitable, "I met a young lady at the ball last week, a deuced pretty girl, too,—in fact, perfectly charming,—by the name of Miss Edith Brinkerhoff, but I don't suppose she is any relation of yours?"

"Well, but she is though," said Lin. "She s my sister."

"What do you tell me? She your sister, and I have been making observations about her in your very presence? What was it my young friend, what was it, sir, that I said?"

"You didn't say anything bad," said Lin, "you just said she was deucedly pretty."

"My dear boy," said Willets, in his most confidential tone, "never, never must you mention that remark of mine to your charming sister. You should be proud, sir, proud to have such a lady for your sister. To be sure," he continued, assuming a careless, off-hand style, "she is yet young, but she will be like the unfolding rose bud; as she develops she will grow more and more charming and lovely, and as the rose sheds its fragrance on the atmosphere around, so, also, will she scatter untold wealth to the winds and impoverish the purse of her husb—."

At this point in his speech the Inimitable came straight to his feet and looked at himself in the mirror, which hung on the opposite wall, in unfeigned astonishment: then raising his hand to his face, he pinched himself to make sure he wasn't asleep. Then turning slowly to Lin he said in a greatly subdued voice: "What did I say last about your sister, your beautiful, charming sister?"

"Why, I wasn't a listening," said Lin looking up, "to what you were a saying. I was paying attention to this telegraph business."

"My tender youth," said Willets, "look up here, look up in my face; now, sir, are you telling me the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you John Rodgers, when you say that you were listening to the instrument instead of listening to me?"

"That's what I said, and it's the truth," contended Lin.

At this the Inimitable dropped, rather than sat, down in his chair, elevated one foot to the top of the table, and, throwing the other across it, commenced singing softly to himself:

"A miss is as good as a mile; a miss is as good as a mile."

Then, suddenly turning to Lin, he said, "My dear young man, you are a charming companion. If there is anything in the wide world that I can do for you, speak out."

Here Lin attempted to state what was uppermost in his mind, but was promptly checked by the Inimitable, who exclaimed:

"Hold on, hold on, my dear young friend, hold on until I shall have finished the sentence. As I was saying, if there is anything in the wide, wide world that I can do for you, speak out, and if it is within my humble power to grant it, I am yours to command. Remember, sir, I am yours to command. And now, my charming boy, as you sit here before me, how vividly my own past comes back, and again I live in the happy rosy, rosy existence of my youth, when I was a household pet; but I have traveled since then, and the entire journey has been up a steep and slippery grade. My dear boy, those days were years and years ago."

"I wanted to ask you, Mr. Willets," said Lin, "if you could——"

"Now, my youthful companion," said the Inimitable, abruptly, "I discover that you are actually about to ask a favor of me—a favor at my hands. Be guarded, be careful, my boy, what you ask. Don't ask me for money, for I have none; don't ask me to give you a character, for I have no character myself—that is, I mean I have none to give away. You understand me, no character to spare. No, that is hardly what I mean, but the expression I feign would use has slipped my memory. But, to continue. Neither must you ask me for a position on either line of my railways, for while it is true that I am a sort of an official, yet the hiring of the help part of the business I leave entirely to the other officials; and, lastly, don't ask for a pass. I am free to admit that my name, Edward Willets, on a blank piece of paper would carry you from one end of either road to the other, yet, supposing you were traveling recklessly about on the cars, and there should be a collision, and your blood should be spilled, where would the blame be? My youthful friend, your blood would be on me and my children. Yes, more, it would be an unerasable stain on all who bore the name of Willets, even down to the third and fourth generations.

"You see, my young companion, how easily power

can be abused. Now I have just dropped these few remarks for caution's sake, and I do sincerely trust that you will be guarded in your request, and draw it mild. It will then be in better keeping with the poetic harmony of the eternal fitness of things."

"All I wanted to say was this," said Lin, in a tone of desperation, "I want to learn telegraphy, and thought, maybe, you would teach me at nights."

"My dear Lin, is that all the request you have to make?"

"Yes, sir," said Lin.

"My youthful companion," said the Inimitable, "I well know you wish to learn your fate, as it were, at once, so I will give you my decision without further remarks. Your request, sir, is granted, and there is my hand."

"Thank you, sir," said Lin, with some emotion.

"Now, my dear boy," continued Willets, "there are a few conditions I wish to talk over. In the first place. suppose I should be very tired and weary and should lie down and sleep part of the night, and the next day or some later date, some one would ask you if Mr. Willets ever slept on duty, what would you tell them?" said the Inimitable, as he shut one eye and looked straight at Lin with the other.

"I would tell them," said Lin, "it was none of their business."

"That would not do," said Willets, "for possibly it might be some of their business. It might be an official —one of my brother officials, you understand—that asked you."

"Well, then, I would tell them," said Lin, "that you never slept a wink from the time you came here till you went away."

"Hold on, my charming boy; that would be a little strong," said Willets. "Now, supposing," he continued, "I should put my hankerchief over my face when I slept, then you could say you never saw my eyes shut in sleep in your life."

"All right," said Lin, "I promise."

"Well, then supposing," said the Inimitable, "that this fall and winter I should wish to take in the dances

up at the little town hall, do you think you could come after me pretty swiftly if you should hear the station call?"

"Yes, sir," said Lin with emphasis, "and there is not a boy in Hampton that can run faster than I can."

"All right, my charming boy," said Willets, "you are a lad after my own heart. Now tell me, my dear Lin, why you want to learn telegraphy?"

"Well," said the boy, "I am bound to go to College, and I thought if I learned to be an operator I could earn money, and use it in going to school."

"My dear boy," said the Inimitable, "your ambition is a truly laudable one, but you should have a pure poetic love for the art. Oh my youthful friend, there is a musical ring in the sounding instrument that is simply charming! To think that I, Edward Willets, with this intellect grasp," tapping his head with a pen-stock, "and with this hand, record the electric sparks of intelligence from the far East, the far West, the far South and the far North, is something truly wonderful. Or, supposing I write up a stirring article on some vital issue of the day, blood-curdling and full of thunder. Then I sit down here at my table, and by a given process I transmit it to the lifeless wire. Almost instantly it is grasped by the press as rubies and precious stones. To-morrow's paper publishes the article underneath double-leaded head-lines, and, before the blazing sun has set, it is read by countless thousands. Oh, what an example of the eternal fitness of things!"

"Do you write for the press, Mr. Willets?" asked Lin.

"Now, look here, my young friend, don't ask me that question," said Willets, "I do not wish to prevaricate to you, a young friend whom I have of my own free will and accord taken, as it were, into my bosom as a companion. Don't ask me if I ever did anything very grand or sublime. Don't ask, and then, I will be saved from the odious and heart-breaking task of prevaricating."

"Now, one thing further, Lin," said Willets, "before you go. I see you are getting ready to take your leave.

If any one should ever ask you if Mr. Willets wasn't quite a poetic genius, or if Mr. Willets wasn't quite a Bible student, or if Mr. Willets wasn't quite a political sort of a man, I think you had better say that you think he is." As Willets said this, he inserted both thumbs in the arm-holes, of his vest, and screwed his mouth up like the letter O, and looked hard at Lin, with the eye that was not shut.

"All right, sir," said Lin, "I'll fill 'em up, if they ask me about you. Good night, Mr. Willets, I will be on hand to-morrow night at seven o'clock, sharp."

"Good night, my charming boy, good night," said Willets.

The boy hurried away and down along the unlighted streets, until he came to a dark, deserted alley, into which he quickly turned and hurried on into the darkness and gloom. The alley lead down to the back of some old buildings that were wholly deserted, save by bats and vermin. The sides were swayed out and in many places the roof had wholly fallen in it. It was the Toms-All-Alone of Hampton, and toward this decaying mass Lin Brinkerhoff bent his steps.

Presently a muffled knock was heard, and the indistinct hum of voices, which lasted about half an hour, after which Lin emerged from among the fallen rafters, props, and loose boards, and came suddenly out of the alley into the street again, and hurried homeward, wholly unconscious that he was shadowed by a dark, muffled figure from the time he left the depot until the door was closed on him at home.

Mrs. Brinkerhoff was waiting for her son's return with considerable impatience, for she disliked very much to have him out at night, especially as there had been no small amount of petty thieving going on in Hampton for two years past.

A Mr. Fords, the principal merchant of the place, had been the main loser. He carried a general stock of goods, such as groceries, clothing, dry-goods, hardware, etc., and had accumulated a fortune, after many years of patient toil. His losses consisted mostly of small articles, such as cutlery, revolvers, canned fruit, hammers,

hatchets, wrenches, suits of boys' clothing, fine dry-goods, etc. Also a number of cattle had disappeared from the village, nor could the slightest clue be found that would lead to the discovery of the thieves.

Soon after Lin returned home he had sought his bed. First, however, he told his mother of his success with Mr. Willets. Long after Lin was fast asleep, Mrs. Brinkerhoff sat in her low chair by the sewing stand and worked away busily with nimble fingers.

She was a kind-hearted woman, always trying to do a charitable act to some worthy child of poverty. It was this spirit that prompted her to assume the care of little Bertha Pembrooke, Pen's sister, when she was left an orphan. In former times she had been a proud, spirited woman, and had seen better days, but a cloud settled over her life when her husband was numbered with the slain on the field of battle, and after that her own and her daughter Edith's hands were their only means of support. Incessant work, early and late, with the needle, had furnished them with the necessaries of life. Then a pension came, the price of her husband's bravery and blood, and with its help they got on better. Edith was now approaching early womanhood, and was a faithful help to the mother.

Lin was several years his sister's junior, but in him the fond mother saw the staff and support of her declining years, and in the silent hour of thought she saw the greatness he would achieve and the honored place he would occupy among the children of men. So like his father, she would say, so ambitious after knowledge and so clever in business matters.

And as she stitched away, her thoughts would sometimes turn thoughtfully over the pages of the past, and again she would live over her girlhood days in her old Kentucky home where she had grown to womanhood and had been wooed and won by one of Kentucky's noblest sons. For years their union had been happiness. Then came a reverse in their financial affairs. The inherited wealth that had been left them was swept away at a single stroke, like dry leaves are blown about in the Winter's gale.

After that they came to Hampton, and here their children had been born, and all things had gone well with them until the cruel, cruel war called her life's companion from her side, and left his mangled body in a distant clime, interred with many others in one common grave, and marked, "Unknown."

Such is life, such our earthly existence. The morning of life is bright and cheery, and presents many prospects that are truly alluring. The untried road looks smooth and safe while the burden of life seems light, and hope, that dearest of boons to mortals given, is ever ready to stimulate the soul in present difficulties, and paint bright pictures for the future.

"Tis well we who are born heir to sin know not what the future holds in store for us. Indeed, the happiness of the passing moment would be poisoned, and hope would no longer buoy us up. So life passes away; at best it is but the brightness of a morning, the rich warmth of high twelve, and the darkness of a night."

CHAPTER VI.

THE INIMITABLE IN TROUBLE.

TRUE to his promise, Lin Brinkerhoff reported for duty the following evening, after the events recorded in the preceding chapter, at sharp seven o'clock. The Inimitable was there, but as there was nothing to do until midnight, unless it might be some "commercial" business, he was walking on the platform in front, with down-cast head and arms crossed behind him, the very image of despair, much like a growing prosperous tree, in the hot sun, that has suddenly received the poisonous sting of a locust, or has had its sap root cut by a devouring gopher. The leaves wither and droop and its whole appearance is that of a premature decay.

Lin was at a loss to account for this great change in

Mr. Willets, whom he had imagined to be the happiest, most care-free mortal living, and while he was wondering what possibly could have happened, the Inimitable put his head in at the door, lifted one foot to the sill and left the other on the platform below, while with both hands he grasped the door casing, against which he also rested his flushed yet dejected looking face.

He said, in a dolefully subdued and weak voice: "My aspiring young friend, have you ever read the story of the teacher and the sick scholar?"

"I believe I have," replied Lin.

"Well this is a similar case, only it's the teacher that's sick. You, my dear companion and student, are the scholar, and you are strong and well, but I, your teacher, am fading and drooping, cut down, as it were, in my prime, and am like unto the crushed and withering marigold.

"Ah! long years ago I was young and loving, and loved, but it was so long, long ago that its memory to me to-night is like a half-forgotten dream."

Here the Inimitable's head drooped down on his hands, and Lin was so frightened he hardly knew what to do.

By considerable coaxing, he finally persuaded the seemingly exhausted man to lean on him, and be conducted into the operator's room, and be seated in a large arm-chair. As he sank down in it he said, in a half-audible whisper, "The old arm-chair—the old arm-chair; how I love it, how I love it."

"Now, Mr. Willets," said the excited Lin, "I will run for the physician at once."

"No, no," he responded, "you mustn't do that."

"Yes, but I must," remonstrated Lin.

"Well, I say," said the Inimitable, rousing up and speaking with his old time vigor, "you must not. Has it so soon come to this," he continued, "the pupil disobeying the stern command of his teacher?"

Lin was dumbfounded at his sudden recovery, and could make no reply. Mr. Willets continued:

"My sickness, aspiring youth, is not of a kind that physic will cure. Nothing but pills of gold will allay

my suffering. It is a deep-seated disease, and has got fully three months the start of me.

"In my hand," said he, as he drew a letter from his pocket, "is a prescription, but where is the pharmacist that will fill it? The prescriber hereof took me to be an able druggist. I am, my dear young friend, but my stock is low—in fact, wholly exhausted. All our talk, my boy, must be grave-yard talk."

"I will never repeat a word you say to me," said Lin.

"Well, then," said the Inimitable, as he slowly unfolded the letter, "I will read the dose that is herein prescribed for me."

"At Home, Oct. 1st, 18—.

"Edward Willets, Esq.:

"I am very much afraid you have been deceiving me shamefully. I took you into my house, supposing you to be a gentleman, but instead I now believe I have been harboring a shiftless, good-for-nothing individual.

"You would not have forfeited the title of gentleman because of your poverty, for it's no disgrace to be poor, only inconvenient; but from the time you first stepped your foot into my house you have showered poetic effusions around me that have almost amounted to a declaration of affection. Imagine, then, my feelings this evening, when putting your room in order, to find a poem of just even one hundred verses, which, by its date, I saw you had written only yesterday. The following is but a sample of the whole:

'Oh, how I long to leave this lonely villa,
And live with you, my charming Cinderilla.

"Now, I don't know who Cinderilla is, and I don't *care* who she is, but if I was advising her to be happy, I would say to her: 'Have nothing to do with Edward Willets, Esq.' Sir, you have been boarding at my house fourteen weeks, which, at four dollars per week, makes

Fifty-Six Dollars, that you owe me. Pay at once, sir, and *save costs and trouble.*

"Respectfully,

"MISS ZURILDA GOODSIL.

"P. S.—Unless this board-bill is paid by twelve o'clock to-morrow, I will put your account into a lawyer's hands and order your wages garnished.

Z. G."

"There!" said Willets, when he had finished, "you have heard the ingredients of the prescription; now, what the devil am I to do? If she garnishees my wages my name is 'Dennis' on the whole line; no more jobs on either road for me. I know what I am talking about, for I have had experience of this kind before."

"Haven't you got any money?" inquired Lin.

"That, my youthful companion, is just the stick. I fancy that I can talk down all her other objections. In fact, I am quite sure I have some ability in that direction, but money, in this case, must come, and it is the very one article that I haven't got. That is, I haven't enough to liquidate the entire debt."

"Mr. Willets," said Lin, in a deep whisper, as he got up and fastened the door and looked cautiously out of each window, "I have a little money, which I will loan you, but you must promise me that you will die before revealing to any living being the fact that I have money. My own mother, Mr. Willets, does not know of it. If you go away from here I will never learn telegraphy, and so I confide so much of my secret to you and will loan you the amount you lack to make up the fifty-six dollars."

As soon as Lin concluded, the Inimitable came quickly to his feet, and, hastily throwing off his coat, proceeded to unbutton his shirt sleeves, which he rolled up to his elbow.

"Lin, my charming, appreciative and inspiring youth, loan me your pocket-knife until I tap an artery."

"Why, what are you going to do that for?" asked Lin, with a frightened look.

"I wish, sir, to tap an artery, and with the blood that

flows therefrom record my sacred promise to keep inviolable so much of your secret as you have this night communicated to me."

"No, no, Mr. Willets," said Lin, "if you give me your word it is all I ask for. Count your money and tell me how much you have, and then I will make up the balance."

"My dear boy, I am a better business man than you think. I always know to the cent how much money I have. I told you awhile ago that I was not the happy possessor of sufficient funds to liquidate the entire indebtedness, which is fifty-six dollars. Now you give me fifty-five dollars and ninety cents, and I will toss my dime into the jack pot, and there we are."

"You haven't much on hand, have you?" said Lin as he drew forth an old-fashioned purse and counted out the money.

"Look here, my appreciated benefactor," said Willets, as he rolled the bank bills up and stowed them away in his pocket, "that last remark of yours was surely an unthinking one. Ten cents, my boy, is ten cents the world over. It is equal to two nickels, or a tenth part of a dollar, and represents a given value; a value, my charming boy, that is not to be sneezed at. In a ten-cent piece you see two small beers, or a foaming double header, and so long as you have ten cents in your pocket you are never broke. Now, my dear Lin, in the future be careful, be guarded, and never again make a depreciating remark about the widow's mite."

"Where I got this money, Mr. Willets," said Lin, "of course is my own affair."

"My dear boy," said the Inimitable, now wholly recovering his usual glowing state of tranquillity, "don't mention it, as I have already given my sacred and never-to-be-broken promise of eternal secrecy; but your kindness to me this evening, my charming youth, can never, no, never, be forgotten while this heart within me continues to thump and throb. You well know, my dear boy, that when you first came this evening I was feeling downhearted, dejected and miserable, but how miserable

'No human tongue can tell,'

My frail bark was headed toward a suicide's grave. In short, the prescription I had received in this letter was the final crusher that was fast playing the very mischief with all my earthly hopes; but

'A friend in need is a friend indeed.'

You it was, my appreciative and aspiring youth, who hastened

'To the rescue! to the rescue!'

and now I am a changed being. My bark, as it were, seems suddenly to have been launched on the smooth waters of a beautiful river that winds its course like a silver thread through a groundwork of emerald green, shaded here and sheltered there by the leafy boughs of old giant oaks and other stately forest trees, while the shores are thickly lined with lilies, honeysuckles and roses, and thousands of unnamed wild flowers, whose fragrant odors perfume each passing breeze and zephyr, and 'my happy past no longer seems like unforgotten dreams'—excuse the rhyme—but indeed a living reality. Then I was the household pet, the household treasure of a loving family, and rested on 'flowery beds of ease' and basked like an innocent lamb in the love and sunshine of the poetic muse. But, alas, the change since then! Oh, those luxuries of my happy youth! But my charming Lin," he continued, "we must waste no more time loitering, as it were, with the phantoms of memory. I will now proceed to give you your first lesson in the sublime Art of Telegraphy."

Accordingly Lin was given his first lesson, and proved to be a faithful and untiring student.

The hour of seven o'clock the following morning at last came around and the Inimitable bent his steps toward the spinster's. The little parlor door was open, as usual at that time in the morning, and Aunt Zurilda, also as usual, was engaged in her morning occupation of sweeping and dusting, and as Willets entered she first looked up and then straightened her long, lean, lank

figure. Her face wore a half look of surprise at seeing him, mingled with a "I-am-truly-glad-he-came-back" sort of expression, and withal such a regretful, faded look, like her wrapper, which originally in the long ago had been full of bright colors, but little by little the colors had faded and at last been washed entirely out.

"Mr. Willets!" she exclaimed, as she removed from her head the towel she was using in the capacity of a dust cap, "I wrote you a letter last——"

"Miss Goodsil," interrupted the Inimitable, "I insist upon having the first speech, but at the outset I promise you that it will be wholly destitute of poetry, for all the poetry of my being has been knocked and shot out of me in an uncaring manner, much like the front end wad of a pop-gun is shot uncaringly out into the unlimited space of a cold, cold world. First, I will state that the poetry you found was written for a friend of mine, who had no ability to write poetic effusions. I did write the poem, and have already received my pay for the same. What you found in my room was merely a copy. Now, as to the financial part of your letter, I have only this to say: that I have been on the point, at least a dozen different times in the last month, of writing you a letter and inclosing a hundred or a two hundred dollar check, but you have saved me that trouble by making out my bill, which you claim is only fifty-six dollars. I must admit that I consider your bill very reasonable, Miss Goodsil; very reasonable, indeed; and now," said he, as he drew a package from his pocket, "if you will be kind enough to carefully count the contents of this package, you will find that your not over-courteous request for filthy lucre has been complied with to the cent.

"I am, Miss Goodsil, no pauper—far from it. The money I have out at interest, I dare say, would board me."

By the time he had concluded Miss Zurilda was shedding bitter tears of repentance, but when he had ceased she managed to control her emotions enough to say:

"Oh, Mr. Willets, how can I ever make amends for the great injury I have done you?"

"Miss Goodsil, don't mention it. My bark is launched and its sails are spread on an unknown, untried sea. I can no longer tarry in this mundane sphere of earthly woe. The crusher, Miss Goodsil, the crusher that I have received at your hands has knocked all the poetic breezes from out my inflated soul, and left me a withered heap. It is by far the severest shock of all my experience since I was a happy laughing boy and basked in the lap of luxury."

Here the Inimitable broke down entirely, and wept aloud.

The spinster came to his relief with many apologies, and declared his explanations were very satisfactory indeed, and that she would never forgive herself if he went away; and wouldn't he stay and have everything go on just as it had before? and that now he must come out and have a good hot breakfast and a cup of coffee, his favorite beverage, which entreaty the Inimitable was unable to withstand, and notwithstanding his apparent deep-seated emotions, he ate a very hearty breakfast. By the time he was through eating and the cloth had been cleared away, he was the same jolly Edward Willets of old.

On a certain night not many weeks after this, as the hour was nearing midnight, a passer-by in looking through the dingy window of the depot building might have seen the Inimitable and Lin practicing on the closed keys, one the instructor, the other the instructed, in the mysteries of telegraphy. The former is looking remarkably neat, considerably dressed up and cleanly shaven.

The stillness of the night is suddenly broken by the shrill whistle of a locomotive, which announces the coming of the New York and St. Louis Express.

A moment later the train dashes up to the platform. Three passengers get off and hurry into the little depot waiting-room. The burly conductor, in a blue suit with brass buttons, has a lantern strung on his left arm. He thrusts his head into the little window that opens from the operator's room into the waiting-room, and in a surly voice asks:

"Chicago train late as usual?"

"Yes, my dear sir, one hour late," responds Willets, in his accustomed cheery voice.

"Any orders?" again questions the conductor.

"None, my dear sir, none," answers the operator.

The conductor turned and shouted out, "All aboard," as he swung the lantern too and fro, and the train moved on. It is no sooner out of sight than the Inimitable is on his feet and away up town again to enjoy the exhilarating exercise of the mazy waltz. It is the first party of the opening season, and Willets could not think of remaining away.

Let us now take a look at the three passengers who are seated in the little waiting room. One is a very handsome young lady in her later teens or early twenties, and with her is an English-looking lady, rather handsome, and perhaps a little older than her companion. Their fellow-traveler is an old farmer-looking gentleman of the old school, possibly the handsome young lady's father or uncle.

One is impressed, without hardly being able to tell why, that he is a Western farmer, and the impression is equally great that he has been shopping at some Eastern city, and has bought a great many bundles which he seems determined to keep fast hold of.

There is a large bundle under his right arm and a valise in his right hand, and under the left arm there is a square shaped something tied up in brown paper and fastened with a great many strings. If the square something was much larger he could not carry it under one arm.

Then there are two satchels after the style of the old fashioned carpet bags, which he holds in his left hand, and, in addition to all these, his pockets, in the breast of his great coat, look like so many fatted calves. His high-topped boots come up to his knees and his great coat comes down to the top of his boots. A slouch hat partially hides his full brown-bearded face. The beard is slightly streaked with gray.

Three quarters of an hour have passed by since the

St. Louis bound train sped on its way. Only fifteen minutes more and the Chicago train will be due.

Lin rises from the table where he has been practicing on closed keys, and looks through the little ticket office window into the waiting room. There sit the three passengers and every one nodding. The old man's bundles and satchels are sliding and drooping forward, just as the walls of some old castle crumble and fall toward a common center.

His bearded chin rests on his big broad chest; his slouched hat has fallen lower over his face; his hands have partially relaxed their grasp on the satchels; his right leg is thrown across his left knee, and there he sits, cramped up, nodding and sleeping, surrounded by his many bundles.

The screech of a locomotive is heard. The Inimitable hurries into the operator's room just in time to take a train order.

The train is in, the lady travelers rouse up and start out on the platform. The handsome young lady runs back and shakes the old man, and says: "Wake up, uncle, wake up! The train is here." The old man starts up and catches at his possessions, hurries out on the platform and swings up on the car step just as the train moves on. The Inimitable goes out into the waiting room, stops a moment, stirs up the slumbering embers in the stove and hurries up town again. Lin resumes his practicing on the closed keys, and chuckles to himself to think how fast he is learning.

A half hour goes by.

Suddenly the instrument sounds the station's call.

Lin answers.

Then comes a message, but he is so confused and excited he cannot quite catch it; something about a s-a-t-c-h-e-l then away it goes again too fast for him; then the word d-o-l-l-a-r-s.

He jumps up and rushes out into the waiting room. Then a little later he is on the street, going after Mr. Willets.

Five minutes go by, and they both come.

In a moment the key is thrown open, the call answer-

ed, and then comes the message from a station some twenty miles up the road. It reads as follows:

"Operator at Hampton:

"Take care of satchel left in depot. It contains Fourteen Thousand Dollars. STEPHEN BAINE."

Lin is bending over the Inimitable's shoulder and reads the message. They go out together in silence into the little waiting room, but can see no satchel. Then Lin looks hard at the Inimitable, who in turn stares at Lin.

CHAPTER VII.

A MIDNIGHT VISIT TO THE GRAVE-YARD.

THE fatal night that made Pen a prisoner in the hands of old Hinchey was only one of many eventful nights and days that were to follow.

He tried hard to extricate himself from the grasp of his captor, but to no avail, and soon he was conducted back to what they termed the cave, but what, in reality, was an old, decaying blacksmith shop.

The road that once led by it was now overgrown with rank weeds, and long since untraveled and almost forgotten.

Pen had been by the place many times in his rambles, for it was quite near to Hampton.

Once he attempted to push the creaky door farther open, but it cried out so piteously with its rusty hinges that it frightened him, and he ran away.

Years ago the sturdy smith had thrown aside his leathern apron, and left the wide forge, to cross with the Boatman, Death, to the world beyond; since which time it had remained unoccupied, except by bats and vermin, until it became a rendezvous for thieves.

Originally it was built against an abrupt bank of earth and made quite a commodious apartment back of the old wide forge, now but a mossy mound of earth.

When old Hinchey conducted Pen into this damp and uninviting place, they found Dick Dare seated at an improvised table, constructed of loose boards, on which a candle dimly burned.

He started up quickly when they entered, and, casting a searching glance at Pen, inquired angrily, "What have you here?"

"Oh, this is a fine young man," replied Hinchey. "A smart young man who knows everything, and I think we will have to watch him a little, and, maybe, put him to some use."

As he said this, he chafed his dirty hands together over the smouldering embers of some half-burned sticks of wood. The fire had been kindled near the old forge, and the smoke escaped up through the decaying roof.

Stooping down he pushed the burning embers nearer together, and with his breath started them into a blaze. By its light, and the flickering, sickly light of the candle, Pen could see what his captors looked like.

Old Hinchey was an elderly man, and wore, as if it specially fitted him, a foreboding look. His eyes were very small and very restless, and were shaded with heavy shaggy brows; his face and chin looked like a stubble field, so coarse and hard was the short bristly beard, while his whole look was one of uncleanliness and slovenly habits.

But what added mostly to his offensive look was an incessant, ghastly smile that never for a moment left his greasy face, revealing his tobacco-colored teeth, if a few old snags and fangs could be called such, the whole giving him the aspect of some hungry, carnivorous animal.

His black hair was now streaked with gray and hung in a frowsy fringe about his ears and neck. His greasy hands were ornamented with flinty-looking nails, very long, underneath which a vast amount of dirt had accumulated. His companion, Dick Dare, had a more cleanly look and was much younger, rather slight of build, always scowling, and looked the worse for dissipation, and was in most things a subordinate to the leader, Hinchey.

Dick was the next to speak, and said:

"You will put the kid where he will keep, I presume, if he is in our way?"

"We will talk of that further on," said old Hinchey. "Now, we will see what he knows and what the dear young man has got in his pockets."

"What is your name, my dear young man?"

"I don't want to tell you, sir," said the boy, who could hardly keep from breaking down in tears.

"Don t want to tell old Hinchey what your name might be?" said the questioner. "Oh, my, he is too nice a young man not to tell me what I ask him."

"I wonder," continued Hinchey, "what the dear young man has got in his pockets," and, suiting the action to his inquiry, he proceeded to ransack the boy's pockets through and through.

"Oh, my dear young man," said Hinchey, "here is something that makes my eyes water to look at. Why, you must be a banker. Twenty dollars! Oh, my! what a profitable little man he was. And here is a book, a Bible; now, what a nice young man he must be, sure, to carry a Bible with him."

This last remark old Hinchey seemed to address to Dick Dare, who took the book from his hand and opened it to see if there was any name. Turning to the first leaf he read aloud: "Presented to Penfield Pembrooke by Lillie Baine."

"What?" cried old Hinchey, spring forward and snatching the book from Dick's hand, as if he could not trust his ears, but must read the words himself.

After closely scanning the inscription, he turned to Pen, and his ghastly smile, which for a moment had deserted him, came back.

"Ah, my young man," he said, "so your name is Pembrooke—Penfield Pembrooke. Now, I wonder what your father's name might be."

"I have no father," sobbed the boy. "He is dead."

"Oh, he was dead, was he? Well, what was his name before he died?"

"Leroy Pembrooke, sir," said Pen, between his sobs.

"Look here, Hinchey," said Dick, "you want to go

slow with that boy; you have done enough with his father."

But Hinchey seemed not to heed or hear his companion's words, and went on questioning him.

"I wonder, now," he said, "if such a nice young man as you could not show a poor old man like me where he was buried, the tombstone, you know?"

"Yes, sir," said Pen; "I can show you where both my papa and my mamma are buried. But won't you give me back my Bible?"

"Give you back your Bible, my dear young man?" said Hinchey. "Now, which would you rather have, the Bible or your twenty dollars?"

"The Bible, sir," quickly responded the boy, "and I will forgive you for having taken my money. I promised," he continued, "the mother of the little girl who gave it to me that I would do my best to shun the ways of evil, and would try to be as forgiving toward the sins and short-comings of my associates as she was to the memory of my poor dead papa, who, she said, had caused many deep wrinkles of sorrow to come into her face."

"Here is your Bible, boy," said Dick, as he almost jerked it out of old Hinchey's hands and gave it to Pen.

"Look'ee here, Dick," said Hinchey, in a suppressed tone of wrath, "what are you doing?"

"I am giving the boy back his Bible," said Dick, almost furiously, "and mark me, Hinchey, he is agoing to keep it, though I dare say neither of us need it far more than he does."

"Don't be a fool, Dick," said Hinchey, somewhat sobered down. Then, turning to Pen, he said, blandly and smiling, "Of course, the dear young man can keep his Bible, but he must read a chapter to old Hinchey once in a while; and now he may tell me where his dear papa is buried."

"I will show you, sir," said Pen. "It is only a short distance from here."

"Oh, is that so, only a short distance from here? Then we had better go now and see it before it is any later. I will get my 'bull's-eye' and start right away."

"And I will go along," said Dick.

"Oh, what you going along for?" remonstrated old Hinchey.

"I have my reasons," said Dick, firmly, to which the old "Possum," as he was sometimes called, mumbled out something to the effect that he need not be so mighty particular.

"But I am particular," said Dick, "and I mean to go along."

"You know very well, Hinchey," said Dick, aside, "that you blackened many years of Leroy Pembrooke's life, and I swear you are not agoing to harm a hair of that boy's head."

"You'd better borrow the boy's Bible and read a chapter and have prayer," said the old Possum in a scornful tone. "I presume you will be turning honest again if I don't watch you."

"I have tried to be honest once since I first commenced this accursed life with you," said Dick, "but wherever I went, East or West, you were always sure to hunt me down, and then I would be told that I was an ex-sneak-thief, and could go. And so it went on for nearly three years, until at last I became weary of being branded among honest men as a criminal, and then I came back to you, but I have often thought since that it would have been better for me to have made a hole in the water and named the splashing spray that closed over me, my shroud."

"Well," said Hinchey, "you came to me and I was kind to you, gave you a home, and everything."

"I know I came to you," said Dick, "and you know well why I came. I gave up my sister's love, my home, my friends, my position in society, my name, everything, and became the joint property and slave of yourself and strong drink."

"They say," said old Hinchey with great suavity, "that a calm comes after the storm, and I guess this is a wind-storm; and I have heard it was an 'ill wind that blows nobody good,' ha! ha!"

"Yes," responded Dick, "it is a devil of an ill wind that blows no one good, but that's just the kind of a

breeze you are always stirring up. When the wind commences to blow from your quarter it means misery and woe to your victims."

"It may go a little hard with my patrons," said Hinchey, "but it wins me something."

"It may for the time being be a winning wind to you," replied Dick, "but mark my word, the time is coming when all winds will be against you."

While Dick is making this last observation, old Hinchey is fumbling with the keys at a long dark box which he at all times kept locked. Presently the lid closes down, and the click of the lock is heard, and he comes to the board with a large black bottle. He pours out a glass full of its contents and offers it to Dick, with the admonition to get some heart into him.

Dick starts up, seems for a moment firm, but it is only for a moment, and then he eagerly stretches forth his hand for the glass and quaffs off the liquor at a single draught.

"How is that?" inquires Hinchey.

"That, sir," responds Dick, "makes me your submissive slave again. Pour out another glass—there—" and again he lifts it to his lips and drinks to the dregs.

"Now," said Hinchey, "don't take another religious freak until we get back to the city."

"Look here, Hinchey," said Dick, in a rather hilarious tone, "the only thing the matter with me, by George, was simply a slight heaviness of the heart; in other words, I was blue, but that's passed now and I feel like myself again. But mind, Hinchey, I am going with you and the boy to the grave-yard."

"Well, if you are going, come on, for I am starting," replied Hinchey, and catching hold of Pen's hand, they walked away into the darkness, closely followed by the now happy Dick.

As they went along Dick said, "I suppose you can sleep better if you are sure Pembrooke is in his grave?"

"Hush, hush!" said Hinchey, "you must be more discreet."

Dick by this time felt quite good natured, and so he offered no remark, as they all three trudged silently

along toward the little grave-yard at Hampton, which was soon reached. They stepped carefully over the wooden steps and soon were among the tombs—so solemn and still that the rustling of the dry and withered leaves, as they walked among the mounds of earth, seemed a cruel invasion of its silence; while the stealthiness with which they had stolen into the very presence of the sleeping dead seemed to Pen a stern rebuke to the sacred memory of the departed.

The wooden head-boards that had at first been set up, but now replaced by marble and granite stones, lay half buried in the earth and overgrown with grasses, decaying and rotting as if they, too, claimed the right of burial and sought to intermingle their crumbling particles with the church-yard earth and the dust of men.

At last they came to a place where two unpretentious white slabs had recently been set up, and here Pen kneeled down, and, hiding his face in his hands, wept in silent, stifled sobs as if his tender heart would break.

Dick looked kindly and feelingly at the boy, and at last was forced to draw his own coarse sleeve across his cheek, and brush away a little stranger-tear, then bending down close to old Hinchey's ear, he whispered: "By George, it's sort of touchin', ain't it?"

But old Hinchey paid no attention to what he said. Indeed he seemed lost to all else in scrutinizing the inscriptions on the tombstones. At last, when he had copied the inscription on a piece of dirty paper, he rose to go.

He shook the boy and said, "Come on," but Pen looked up and said, pleadingly, "Oh, please sir, wait a moment."

Dick, quick as thought, laid a strong hold on the old man's collar and pulled him suddenly away before he could reply, and whispered hurriedly in his ear, "By George, Hinchey, you let that boy pray or there will be trouble."

Whether is was the sudden jerk he had received, or the strangeness of so many white slabs of stone, or his satisfaction at learning that Leroy Pembrooke was surely dead, or whether it was something else that caused him

to submit to Dick's command, certain it is that he did submit, and remained standing where Dick let go of him, as silent and motionless as a marble column.

Dick kneeled down between the motionless form of old Hinchey and the kneeling boy. Then with true reverence and veneration he removed his cap and listened, while the weeping boy sobbed forth a prayer,—one that his mother had taught him to lisp at her knee when he was scarce more than a prattling babe. When he came to the close and said, "Amen," Dick responded heartily with, "Amen. God bless the boy."

Not another word was spoken as the three withdrew. With silent tread they retraced their steps to their quarters in the old shop. A lunch was set out by Dick, and Pen was requested by Hinchey to sit at the board and eat, for they were going on a journey.

Pen could hardly swallow a single morsel.

When they were through, old Hinchey consulted his watch and announced the time as two o'clock in the morning. Soon they were on their way. Pen had begged piteously to be set free, but old Hinchey said he had use for him, and "I will, my dear young man," said he, "show you such purty things in the big city, and then the dear boy can go to Sunday school and church every Sunday, and be such a good little Christian. Oh, it was so nice."

Pen said nothing, but trudged on silently between the speaker and Dick, who, he felt, was disposed to be friendly toward him.

Presently they came out into the road that led down near the depot building and away into the country beyond. When they came opposite the depot they could plainly see the long slim figure of Edward Willets, Esq., through the window, and indistinctly hear him talking.

"Hold on," said Dick, "let us hear what they are saying."

They paused and listened, but could hear only one voice. The facts were that Willets was all alone and indulging in bursts of eloquence and poetry.

Presently his voice rose higher, and they heard him say:

"Oh, how I long to leave this lonely villa
And live with you forever, my charming Cinderilla."

"By George," said Dick, "Cinderilla is the name of my sister."

"Hush," said Hinchey. "What's that he is saying? I guess he is making a Fourth of July speech."

"Friends and highly esteemed fellow-citizens," Willets was saying, "This is a day held sacred to national memory wherever the magnanimous-hearted American is to be found, whether in the frontier forts where the sentry paces his weary round, or upon the rolling ship as it speeds along before the gale in foreign seas. It is a day that brings back to mankind the early recollections of youth, and makes him live again in spirit, with the poetic muse, among the scenes of his childhood—the fire-cracker period of his life—now held sacred in the archives of memory. There was a time, my fellow-citizens, years and years ago, when your humble speaker was the pet of a loving, poetic household, but it was a long, long time tince, and its memory to me to-day is the one green oasis of my past."

Here the Inimitable paused for breath, and old Hinchey, not caring to be longer entertained, gave the order to move on, and silently they glided away into the darkness.

CHAPTER VIII.

PEN LEARNS HIS FATHER'S HISTORY.

WE will not pause here to speak of Tobs, the "Hinglishman," more than to say that he was sorely grieved to hear nothing of Pen more than the empty box under the wagon revealed to him, which certainly was rather a dry piece of furniture from which to gain information or consolation.

We must turn from the McGuffin farm and from the exciting scenes that are being enacted at Hampton, and

follow Pen to his city home in Cinapolis, where he has been during the months that have intervened since we saw him last.

Cinapolis is a city of some note on the Ohio River. Not far away from the wharf landing is a narrow, much neglected street, built up on either side mostly with buildings of brick after the pattern of fifty years or more ago. Occasionally, however, an old frame building can be found wedged in among the former class of structures. At one time it was the business thoroughfare of Cinapolis, but succeeding years and enterprise had pushed or drawn the business center many blocks away, and left it a deserted, tumbling-down part of the city, still Cinapolis in name, it is true, but now with a different meaning from what this street then had half a century ago.

Some of these buildings were occupied in part, others were entirely vacant. Signs were fastened in the windows announcing the intelligence that the rooms were "To let." But even they seemed to have been put up years ago, and the devouring hand of time had chipped off many of the letters, and the boards on which these notices were painted were decaying and rotting away like the buildings to which they were fastened, now crumbling and sinking down.

The second floors and the basements of some of them were occupied by low families, deeply steeped in want and ignorance, and other apartments were occupied by lodgers of both sex, of all ages, as deeply steeped in vice and sin.

In the garret-room of one of these decaying structures, accessible only by a rickety outside stairway, which leads up from a narrow, filthy alley in the rear, are seated old Hinchey, Dick Dare and little Pen. This has been their winter quarters. A candle is dimly burning on an aged table, and a smouldering fire is smoking in a broken, dilapidated stove.

It is a wild night without, but notwithstanding all that, old Hinchey is preparing to go on some errand. Perhaps his errand is of such a nature that the wildness of the night will aid him in making a success of it.

"Don't you think," old Hinchey was saying, with that same unmeaning, frightful grin on his face, which exposed to view his almost toothless gums, "that you would like to go out with old Hinchey and learn some more nice tricks?"

The words were undoubtedly addressed to Pen, but Dick chose to answer for him. "I tell you, Hinchey, the boy is not well and has no business out on such a night as this."

"Oh, I guess the dear young man will not die before the morning," replied Hinchey. "Then," he continued, "a nice little boy like Pembrooke can get into a window so much easier than an old man like me; come on, my dear young man, get ready."

"Oh, please, sir," pleaded Pen.

"Look'ee here, Hinchey," interposed Dick, "you have had that boy out in all kinds of weather at least three or four nights a week all winter, and he is mighty near used up, and I swear by the powers that be, that he shall not go out to-night."

Dick had risen to his feet as he ceased speaking, and looked old Hickey square in the face.

"Oh, well, if the dear young man is sick, why he'd better stay indoors," said old Hinchey, in the blandest and most unruffled tone of voice in the world.

As he said this he moved toward the door, turned round, bowed low and said with great suavity of manner and his most ghastly grin, "Good-night, my dears; good-night!" and then was gone.

Pen got up and drew his chair close to Dick's, and had just sat down when the door suddenly opened and the frowzy head of old Hinchey was thrust in, and again he said, "Good-night, my dears; good-night! Don't spark too late, for the dear young man is sick. Ha! ha! ha!" he laughed, almost savagely.

Pen thought he had never heard such a frightful laugh in all his life, as it echoed and re-echoed throughout the hollow, empty garret.

"I say, Hinchey," said Dick, "isn't it blowing too severely for you to go out to-night?"

"Oh, I have heard it said," he replied, "that it was an ill wind that blows nobody good."

"Well, I don't think," said Dick, "that you will win anything to-night, it's too rough."

"It will blow somebody good," said Hinchey. "Somebody will lose and somebody will win, and old Hinchey feels that it's a winning wind for him. Now I'll go. Good night, my dears, good night!"

The door had hardly closed when he re-opened it hastily, and again said:

"My dear young man, you'd better read a chapter in your Bible and pray a little, and don't forget to pray for old Hinchey!" Then that hollow, ghostly laugh echoed throughout the room again, and caused cold chills to creep over the boy. Again the door slammed, and they heard him going slowly down the creaky steps.

When they were thus left alone Dick rose to his feet and said, "I will make you a cup of good hot tea, my boy, and perhaps it will make you feel better."

"Thank you," said Pen.

Presently he spoke again, and said, "What a funny man old Hinchey is; his very laugh frightened me so that I am trembling yet."

"He is the Devil's imp," said Dick, "and faithfully obeys his master."

"Why do you stay with him, Dick?" asked Pen. "Why don't you run away?"

"Speak low, my boy," said Dick as he went to the door, and carefully opening it peered out into the darkness. Then closing and securely fastening it, he came back to Pen's side, seated himself and began:

"Pen, my boy, I intended to leave him immediately on our return to the city from Hampton, and would, had it not been for you. I remained to keep watch and see that no harm befell you. I have observed your patience and forbearance, in your trials here, and at night when you thought I was asleep I heard your prayers and supplications; and many times when you and old Hinchey were out I have taken down your little Bible and read its sacred teachings. I will tell you now, (for I may never have a better opportunity,) your

father's story and old Hinchey's too. In fact, I could not tell the one unless I told the other. The circumstances which I shall narrate happened when I was a mere child.

"Old Hinchey's real name is Henry McGuffin, and his childhood's home was on a little rocky New England farm. This, and more which I will relate, he has told me at different times, else I would not have known it, for he is many years my senior. His father was an intemperate, cruel man, an infidel, believing neither in God nor man, and especially disbelieving in woman. He treated his wife with great cruelty. He considered all forms of religion much as Hinchey considers them now—a farce which only ignorant, weak-headed men and silly women can engage in. Hinchey had a brother Charles, several years his junior, who was not quite so hardened as himself, though following hard in his tracks.

"When Hinchey arrived at his twentieth birth-day, and looked back over his earlier years, he could remember nothing but hardships, privations, and sufferings, and, from what he tells me, I know that his mother, who had passed away a few years earlier, died of a broken heart. But shall I tell you that even now when he speaks of her, which is seldom, it is with a reckless, uncaring disregard; even exults in the ill-usage and insults which she received at his hands, and says of her that she was a weak and silly woman who believed there was a God. At twenty he was wildly pursuing a wild and depraved life, which could not help but entangle him in difficulties. Finally a robbery of a fearfully daring and aggravated nature was committed. Hinchey was suspected and arrested, found guilty, and sentenced to five years in the penitentiary. He served his full term and was released, returning to his old home on a certain balmy evening in the month of June, from which he had been taken just five years before.

"His road led him by the old church-yard where still stood the ivied church, in which, as he termed it, his weak and silly mother had so often bowed in prayer pleading for his waywardness. When he came opposite the old steps,

over which he had so often climbed, he paused, and stepping over, walked out among the tombs, but with no such feelings, Pen, my boy, as yours were, that night in the Hampton grave-yard, but like a money-lender who searches the records to see what lands are mortgaged, so Hinchey searched the inscriptions on the granite monuments and marble slabs in a cold, unfeeling way, for a record of those who had died.

"Passing out presently, he hurried on along the old path that he had trodden so often with childish feet, and just as the last mellow light of the evening sun was falling, casting a rich glow over the growing fields of grain, and lengthening the shadows of the tall trees, he came to the old house—the home of his childhood, the house where he had been born.

"He looked over the fence that seemed so much lower than it formerly was, and well remembered the time when it seemed to be a high wall to him.

"He heard voices within, but they were the voices of strangers, and they seemed to be making merry. So different, he thought, from anything he had ever known while living there. The stately trees in the yard alone looked as if they had held their own in size. Everything else seemed to have grown lower and smaller. There, too, was an old ash-leach behind which he had so often hidden from his drunken, abusive father's sight.

"The darkness of night stole softly on, and presently the lamps were lighted. Then through the window he saw the happy group within, and among others who were there was Leroy Pembrooke, your father. With clenched fists, and muttering curses between his set teeth, he turned and walked hastily away, swearing revenge on Leroy Pembrooke, who had been the principal witness against him when he was tried and convicted, five years before. Such were his feelings and wicked determinations.

"He had chuckled to himself many times when in prison, and eagerly looked forward through the weary perspective of his confinement to a time when he should be liberated and freed from his galling imprisonment.

Then he would say to himself, 'I'll pay 'em back; I'll make Pembrooke, damn him, pay for this!'

"No face welcomed his return, nor did he wish for any welcome. No look of forgiveness was bestowed on him, nor did he long to be forgiven.

"No friendly hand stretched forth to help him, nor did he want help. No words of friendly counsel were breathed in his ears, nor would he have listened to them if they had been showered around him.

"He found lodgings in a low filthy quarter of the nearest town of any note, and waited for his time. He soon found his brother Charles, who was then a stalwart lad well up in his teens, and together they planned. The person who resided in old Hinchey's boy-hood home was a Mr. Macley, a widower of considerable wealth, most of which was in ready money.

"He had two lovely twin daughters, Clara and Bertha. A young man by the name of Stephen Baine was betrothed to Clara, and the arrangement seemed highly satisfactory to old Mr. Macley. Your father, Leroy Pembrooke, paid great attention to Bertha, while at home on his summer vacation from college, but for some reason, not known, old Mr. Macley was very bitterly opposed to his suit, but, notwithstanding the old gentleman's opposition, he and Bertha Macley were betrothed before he returned to Chalmer University, where he was attending school. The fact of the old gentleman's opposition to your father's suit was no secret. The McGuffin boys got wind of it, and also knew that old Mr. Macley had a considerable sum of money in his house. How to obtain possession of the old man's wealth, and at the same time implicate your father in the crime, occupied for the time being, all their secret councils.

"They were successful in their plottings, and it was brought about in this way.

"First, however, I will state that about this time Stephen Baine and Clara Macley were married, and commenced housekeeping a couple of miles distant from the old gentleman's, which left Bertha and her father alone.

'Charles McGuffin, in pursuance of the plot his

brother, old Hinchey, had planned, would every afternoon walk by the place. Occasionally he would stop and chat with old Mr. Macley and his daughter, Bertha. He would not remain long, however, and would take occasion to state that he was going down to the village post-office for his mail. Finally, it got to be quite natural for them to send letters by him to post, and to bring their mail back as he went home. At last Bertha confided in him to the extent of saying that she did not want her father to know of her sending letters to Leroy Pembrooke, and asked him to always be careful and give her the letters when he brought them from the office.

"As soon as Charles got to carrying their mail in this way, his brother removed his lodging to an upstairs room opposite the post-office, in the village of Greenwood, where Bertha posted and received all her letters.

"When Charles brought a letter to the post, or received one, it was first carried to the brother's room and ingeniously opened and read. In this manner they kept thoroughly posted.

"Old Hinchey, among other accomplishments, is a clever forger, very handy with a pen, and so he commenced adding postscripts to each letter in such a clever and similar hand that it was never suspected.

"In less than three months after this commenced, the young couple had concluded to be married at once. How much old Hinchey was to blame for this hasty and premature conclusion, I cannot say. I only know that, soon after this, Leroy Pembrooke and Bertha Macley were married against her father's express command. They took a short wedding trip, and on their return home old Grandfather Penfield Pembrooke, Leroy's father, and for whom you were named, no doubt, threw open wide his doors and bade them welcome.

"Your father was an only child, and his parents loved him for his good qualities. They forgave him his hasty and many times imprudent acts, and passed them lightly over, and said his follies, if he had any, were occasioned by the impetuosity of youth.

"At that time I was twelve years old and my little sister, Cinderilla, was scarce two years old. We were living with your grandfather, where my sister is still living, if she is alive. We were orphans. Our father came over with his young wife from England, and I was born in mid-ocean. When a few years later my little sister was born, my mother sickened and died, and in less than a year after, my father followed her to the silent city.

"He had brought over some money with him from England, but it was all gone. Through the kindness of your grandfather we were given a home.

"My father had a younger brother, whose name was George, but, in reply to a letter we sent to England, we were informed that he had gone to the East Indies, and to this day I have never heard a word of him.

"As I was saying about old Mr. Macley, he was very bitter against his daughter's marriage with your father, and on two different occasions they had very hot words; both got very angry and threatened each other very hard.

"This went on for several months, until one evening after dark, just as your father was mounting his horse at the little village preparatory to starting home, a disguised, muffled-up individual, who wore a slouched hat clear down over his eyes, approached and handed him a letter, and then seemed to vanish in the darkness.

"Your father mounted his horse, and drew up in front of a lighted building, opened and read the letter, which was signed by his father-in-law, old Mr. Macley. It requested him to stop as he went home, and they would talk over their troubles and be peaceably reconciled. This was glad news to your father, and he hastened on toward the old gentleman's house. Arriving there, he dismounted and went to the door, which was open, but no light was burning within. He stepped inside, and just as he did so he stumbled and fell over a prostrate and lifeless body. As he arose to his feet something was dashed against his shirt front and face, but not a sound was uttered. He hastily lit a lamp, and there, before him, lay the corpse of his father-in-law, weltering in his own blood, with his throat cut from ear to ear.

"He wiped his face and looked down at his clothing, and, to his horror, found it was human blood. He rushed out and rode home, aroused every one, and they hastened back to the scene of the tragedy.

"A knife was found which was identified as the property of your father. He was accused of the murder, but protested his innocence and produced the note which had brought him to the murdered man's house; but Stephen Baine, his wife Clara, and even Bertha, identified the handwriting as that of your father, and in a letter, which he wrote the next night from some obscure retreat where he had taken refuge, he acknowledged that the writing did look like his own, but he protested his innocence and said he knew nothing about the murder.

"Notwithstanding this, he was believed to be the guilty party, even by his own father and mother, and his wife, Bertha.

"Not a cent of the murdered man's money could be found. The murderer, whoever he was, had taken the last penny. A few months after this a little baby girl was born to the heart-broken young wife, and was christened, 'Katie L. Pembrooke,' the L., the young mother said, was for Leroy.

"Three years later Bertha Pembrooke died of a broken heart. I was there when she passed away. One hand she laid on the sunny head of little Katie, and, with the other reached upward, as if she were calling, and died with the name 'Leroy' trembling on her lips."

CHAPTER IX.

THE ESCAPE FROM OLD HINCHEY.

THE wind was still whistling cheerlessly through the streets and alleys of Cinapolis, when old Hinchey turned his steps homeward, if such a garret lodging place in a tumble-down old building could be called a home.

He carried a bundle under his arm, and as he walked, or rather shuffled, along, through the deserted alleys, he seemed so stooped and bent that he hardly had the semblance of a man.

When at last he came to the stairs that led up to his miserable lodging, he crawled rather than walked up to the door, which, to his surprise, he found to be securely fastened. Forthwith he applied to the panels the toe of his shoe with great vehemence, and kept it up until Dick, rousing up from a sound sleep and dropping the thread of his dream, hastened to let him in.

"Why did you fasten the door?" he asked between his chattering teeth. "Did you want to keep me out all night?"

Dick mumbled out some excuse, climbed back into bed again, and was soon fast asleep. No doubt he took up the thread of his dream just where it had been dropped, and dreamed on in happy anticipations of a better life.

Old Hinchey sparingly added a few fresh lumps of coal to the dormant fire, which roused up presently, as if it, too, had been taking a nap. He then drew a chair close to the rickety stove and proceeded to rub his greasy, dirty hands together, while he stared deep into the burning coals with his glistening, restless eyes, waiting for the basin of tea he had prepared to steep.

"Must go before long," he mused. "Charlie is a jolly brother, sells lots of things, though he does drive a hard bargain with me sometimes. I wonder why he wants me to watch the dear young man so closely. I expect the boy is up to some of my good brother's tricks. Well, the river will soon break up, and then I'll put him on a boat and send him South so far he will bother nobody. I guess I'll start to-morrow for the cave, and sell my beauties."

As he said this he looked beamingly down at his bundles. He then brought out a cold lunch, from which he ate greedily, stopping occasionally to drink off a draught of hot and steaming tea. When he was through he stole softly to the couch where the boy lay peacefully

sleeping, dreaming perhaps of little golden-tressed Lillie Baine.

"I guess the dear young man is not so very sick," he muttered, as he went silently to his own bunk, and soon after he was sniffing, wheezing and snoring away until the very rafters of the old building were echoing his baritone notes.

It was late the following morning before they were astir, but finally Dick announced that breakfast was in readiness, and they all sat down to the table, inhaling the delicious odor arising from brimful cups of coffee. They ate heartily of the brown bread and butter, and fine broiled steak smoking hot, which Dick had prepared with great credit to himself.

After the breakfast was over, old Hinchey announced that he was going away for a few days' tramp. Accordingly, early that afternoon, he set out alone, leaving Dick and Pen together, both the happier for his having gone.

"Now, my boy," said Dick, soon after they were alone, "we will pack up, too, and take a tramp, and my greatest wish is that if we ever see old Hinchey again it will be when he has a black cap over his head and a good stout rope around his neck."

"Amen!" answered Pen. "It may be a wicked wish, but I owe him one for my father's sake. And now, Mr. Dick," continued Pen, with great earnestness, "you do not know how happy you have made me, and in return, Dick," said the boy, drawing softly to his side, "I will make you, oh! so happy, if you can only forget strong drink."

"Hush, hush!" responded Dick, with great emotion, "don't mention my master's name or you will make me weak. I will only promise this, that, with your counsel and help, I will try hard to be my own master."

"Amen!" said the boy.

"Now," said Dick, "let us be going."

"Yes, yes," responded Pen, cheerily, "let us get away from this dismal, wicked place, never to come back or even think of it again. Together we will wander out from under its darkening shade, and come at last into the open light of sunny happiness, and every

gentle breeze that blows will win us farther and farther away from the life old Hinchey leads."

"We will," said Dick, "and trust ourselves to God. We may yet see many cheerful days, and learn to forget this time as if it had never been, or, if remembered at all, only as a broken dream."

"True, true," said the boy. "We must always put our trust in God, and I am sure if we earnestly beseech him, He will lead us from the low valley of darkness and woe to the high hill of light and happiness. Already," he continued, "I feel happier than at any time since my parents' death—happy almost as I used to be when I wandered forth alone into the deep woods to gather the wild flowers from the grassy banks of the little brook near my old home."

"One word, Pen, before we start," said the boy's companion, "never call me Dick after we leave this accursed place, but call me Richard."

"I promise," said the boy, "and the old name we will leave in the garret room along with other memories we fain would forget, and from which we are fleeing away."

The slanting rays of the afternoon sun were casting long shadows eastward, when these two passed for the last time out at the creaky door and down the old rickety steps of the alley.

Not a word was spoken as they pressed on in glad silence, elated with glowing hopes of something better than they were leaving.

The evening drew on and darkness was closing in; still on they went through the whole length of Cinapolis and away toward the manufactories, whose huge furnaces lighted up the dark sky. While they are thus journeying on, we will, for a time, leave them, and invite the reader back to the McGuffin farm, where we left Tobs in great suspense because of Pen's long absence.

As we draw near, the first voice that breaks upon us is that of C. McGuffin, Esq. who is in a fit of rage, it seems, as he lustily calls for Tobs.

"By thunder! Where can he be?" says the Phenomenal McGuffin. "It does seem," he continued, "that

nobody knows where anybody is, and everything is out of place."

"Hits me you're calling, was hit?" inquired a voice near his elbow.

McGuffin hastily turned about and confronted Tobs. "Yes, sir," he shouted, "you are the very chap I want; here is a letter for you; now read it,—or shall I read it for you?"

"No, thank'ee, sir, Hi guess Hi can read my hown letters."

"Well, I didn't know," said McGuffin, "but what it might be from that scape-grace of a boy, Pen Pembrooke."

"Well, hif hit was from 'im, Hi don't know w'y you should read hit."

"Be careful," said McGuffin, "be careful, Tobs, and don't get impudent. You never have yet, and you don't want to commence now."

Tobs made no reply to this, but stole away toward the barn, where he could be alone to read his letter. He went into the wagon-shed and seating himself on the very box that Pen had taken his twenty-mile ride in, examined the missive. It was dated some ten days after Pen's disappearance, and was written on a miserable old piece of greasy paper, and read as follows:

"Dear Tobs:—Old McGuffin is a thief. I got caught by old Hinchey and Dick Dare. They are both asleep now. We are on a boat on the river. I will give this to a lady and beg her to send it to you. I heard old Hinchey say we would stop at some place soon, but I did not hear the name. I have my Bible yet and pray for you every night.

"Good-by Tobs, I'll get away and come back before long.

"Yours truly,

"PENFIELD PEMBROOKE.

"P. S.—Don't tell Mr. McGuffin you got this letter."

"No, Hi guess Hi'll 'ardly tell 'im about hit,' thought Tobs, as he quickly slipped off his shoe and placed the letter beneath the insole.

There is a sensation which steals over us, at times, of the immediate presence of some one. Although we do not see them, we feel a disturbed conviction that we are not alone.

This was Tobs' feeling when he was tying up his shoe. He did not care to look and search about for the presence of the unknown, but determined to remove himself to some place of absolute secrecy and then remove the letter from his shoe and burn it to ashes.

Accordingly he strolled out from the wagon-shed, and away through the orchard, down by a heavy growth of hedge. There, hastily removing the letter from its place of concealment, he lighted a match and soon little Pen's letter, that Tobs would have liked so much to keep, was rapidly burned to ashes, and only the blue smoke curling away so listlessly and the falling ashes, much whiter than the paper, marked the close, and silently proclaimed its mission ended.

Just as the last semblance of smoke was disappearing, Tobs heard a footstep behind him. Turning around, he found himself face to face with Mr. McGuffin, who sternly demanded, "What have you been doing?"

"Hi was just burning that letter, you know," said Tobs.

"What did you do that for?" said McGuffin, sternly, while an evil look, more frightful than ever, appeared on his countenance.

Tobs noted his dangerous look and concluded to extricate himself by stratagem from McGuffin's disfavor, and so he said:

"Hit was too good news, sir, to be true. Hi am no longer a pauper, you know, but 'ave expectations to quite a fortune, sir."

"What?" said the Phenomenal McGuffin, his whole countenance changing to a look of greedy pleasure. "Are you going to get some wealth?"

"Hi think so, sir," replied Tobs, "hif nothing 'appens, you know."

"Tobs, my friend," said McGuffin, warmly, "here is my hand, and with it my best wishes that your hopes may be realized at a mighty early day."

"Thank'ee, sir, for your 'earty wish," responded Tobs.

It cannot be said that Tobs had stated other than the truth, for he was sure that if he could once get McGuffin in his power he would have no trouble in getting back the money he had robbed him of, years before. Neither was it an unnatural act on McGuffin's part to extend a ready hand to that which promised prosperity.

Every day we see the same spirit manifested all around us.

The poor laborer hurrying home at nightfall, with smirched face and soiled closing, is passed by unnoticed. Not even a nod of recognition greets him. And when on the Sabbath-day he attends service with his cleanly but poorly clad family about him, how cold and chilly the temperature is made by glossy broadcloth and rustling silks. Even the clergyman in many of our fashionable churches seem to look upon those in humble circumstances as if they were but tenants, and not partners, in the vineyard of the Lord.

But let sudden wealth dawn upon this poor laborer, and how marked the change, both in the church and on the street!

Friendly hands are extended to him everywhere and under all circumstances. His clothes are never too much soiled for him to be invited into the most richly furnished parlors, and his hands never too rough to be warmly clasped by the aged, the middle-aged, and the young. Such is custom.

Tobs was a man of fair education and good judgment. To be sure, since the loss of his money, his life had been a blank, and he seemed to have existed in a half dazed state, with a belief that McGuffin had his money and a vague hope that sometime he would recover it.

The evening of the day on which he received Pen's letter, he walked to the Mills and called on Tim Mannahan, the postmaster, and was cordially greeted by that gentlemanly official with:

"By me soul, if it isn't afther being Tobs. Why, sure, sir, give us yer hand. How does the evening find yez, I don't know?"

"Hi ham rather well, you know," replied Tobs, "'ow his yerself?"

"Ah, sure, and I am afther being quite well, thank you," replied Tim.

"Hi want to 'ave a confidential talk with you, Mr. Mannahan," saids Tobs, after a moment's pause.

"Sure, now," said Tim, "I wonder what could be the mather? Be afther steppin' inside the railin', Tobs, and take this seat."

"Thank'ee, sir, Hi'll just lay my 'at hon yer counter," said Tobs, as he deposited that article of wear and took the offered seat.

Then followed a long consultation between the two, in a very low tones and sometimes half audible whispers.

Their consultation lasted a full hour, and then they arose both seemingly highly pleased with the conference, and were soon carefully examining Tim's stock of revolvers.

Shortly after, they emerged from the store to the street in front, and when old Tim had locked the door, good night was said, and each started for home.

The evening following this, about five o'clock, McGuffin asked Tobs to hitch up his best team to his best wagon.

The day had been very chilly and cloudy, and the wind was blowing a strong gale. Sprinkles of cold rain were falling, but notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather C. McGuffin, Esq., started out on his journey, which certainly could not be otherwise than very lonely. The darkness came on, darker and darker, and the wind blew harder and harder; the rain came down faster and faster, not straight down, but came at the Phenomenal McGuffin sidewise, with just about such a slant as marching soldiers hold their guns across their shoulders.

But neither the darkness, the wind nor the pelting rain prevented him from keeping steadily on his course.

Occasionally the wind would die away as if it had

exhausted itself, and proposed to take a rest, but McGuffin would no sooner make up his mind that this was the case when he would hear it muttering and growling in the distance.

Then it came rushing and sweeping along toward him, gathering both sound and strength as it approached, and finally dashed against the Phenomenal with all its force, as if it would throw him from his wagon or deter him from his purpose. Then on past him it would go, plowing and scouring away over the fields with a deafening roar as if it were calling back to the other waves of wind to follow.

"Damme, this is rough, or I don't know," the Phenomenal would occasionally mutter to himself.

The destination of his visit that night was Hampton, and his mission to see if he could learn anything of Pen. Then, he had a few small boys, of whom Lin Brinkerhoff was the acknowledged chief, to pilfer and steal such things as they could carry off, for which he would pay them money, not more in any case, however, than half what the goods were actually worth. These boys had their head-quarters in the old, tumble-down, decaying building which has heretofore been described.

If Pen was at Hampton, he proposed to have his fifteen dollars back from Zurilda Goodsil, peaceably if possible, but if fair means didn't bring it, he would commence an action against the spinster for its recovery. If, on the other hand, nothing was known of the boy, he would for the time being let the matter rest, and hope old Hinchey had him in safe keeping; for, if the lad went to Hampton with him on the night he disappeared, he certainly saw several things, and knew entirely too much to be let run.

Just after midnight he drew rein at the out-skirts of the village, and after carefully tying his jaded horses, proceeded on foot.

A couple of hours later he returned having learned all that can be learned about Pen, which is nothing.

"I will have to wait," he muttered. "until Hinchey comes again." Then, turning to a slight figure by his side, he says:

"Take good care of the money I paid you, boy."

"Never fear, sir, I'll do that," is the quick reply, "and if I hear anything of Pen I will write you."

"That's right, my boy," responds McGuffin. "It would do my eyes good, and make his water, if I could find the runaway scape-grace." Alas, he little guessed where his next meeting with Pen Pembrooke would be.

Presently his steeds start up, and silently move away, and he is gone into the deepening darkness, the howling wind, and pelting rain.

There are many shadows falling here and there over the earth, and as the slight figure turns to go a shadow seems to swallow him up in its gloom.

CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH TOBS LEARNS OF HIS NIECE AND NEPHEW.

C. McGUFFIN, Esq., drove on through the darkness of the stormy night, until his horses seemed ready to fall down with fatigue and exhaustion.

The roads were so drenched with water that they were almost impassable because of the deep mud.

At last they stopped altogether, as if they demanded a compromise of some kind from their inhuman master before they would go a step further.

"Get up there," shouted McGuffin, "you lazy rascals, go on."

But the lazy rascals never moved a step, and only groaned a remonstrance to their master's brutal treatment.

"Hey! what's the matter? Give out?" said he. "I guess they are, by thunder! The next house I come to I will put up till morning."

Whether the tired animals understood their master's promise, or whether they were fearful of the whip, or

found it less comfortable standing still than moving on, or whether it was for some other cause, certain it is that they started forward again with renewed energy.

Presently the dim light of the little hotel where Pen had first met Lillie Blaine and her mother became discernible through the lowering darkness.

McGuffin drew rein at the stables, and after much kicking and knocking, roused the hostler from a sound sleep, who soon made his appearance and put away the fagged and jaded horses, while their master lost no time in waking up mine host and ordering a bed.

The following morning was clear and bright, and the sun came out so warm and smiling that no one could have believed that it was directly or indirectly to blame for such a storm as the night before.

About the hour on the previous evening when Mr. McGuffin had started from home on his lonely journey, the Hampton-bound stage drew rein at the Mills, and a rather stout built man, with a full beard and a pleasant countenance, alighted, with a carpet sack or satchel in his hand, and bent his way to the village inn, where he engaged supper and lodging.

As we have seen, it was a wild and stormy night that followed.

The next morning the stranger was up with the sun, and soon after breakfast walked down to the stables, engaging a horse to ride out in the country a little way.

After mounting, he inquired the best road to a Mr. McGuffin's.

The hostler pointed out the direction, and gave him a minute description of all the roads and by-roads that turned off to the right and left of the one road that would lead him straight to the Mr. McGuffin farm.

The stranger thanked him for the exhaustive information, and started out into the country, knowing far less about the road he was to travel than he did about the by-roads that led off from it.

He was familiar with country life, however, and hence he had no fears but that he would easily find the place.

His horse was splashing along the muddy road about half a mile from the Mills, when coming up to the top of

a hill he met a horseman and saluted him, as he drew rein, with a "Good morning, sir," which was responded to by the approaching horseman in like manner, who also brought his steed to a halt.

"Can you tell me," asked the stranger, "where a Mr. McGuffin lives?"

"Hi guess Hi can, you know," replied the person addressed, who was none other than Tobs. "Hi live hat Mr. McGuffin's myself, but he his not hat 'ome, you know, this morning."

"Well, I did not know that," replied the stranger. "But perhaps," he continued, "you can give me the information I want. I came to see a lad, who, I understand, is working for Mr. McGuffin, by the name of Penfield Pembrooke."

"Hi know hall there is to tell," replied Tobs, "the boy his gone."

"Oh, he has gone, has he," said the stranger. "Where did he go?"

"That, sir," said Tobs, "his a question that's not heasy to hanswer. He went away not very long ago, han 'as not been 'eard hof (I mean seen), since.

"I suppose," continued Tobs, "you hare acquainted with the lad?"

"No," replied the stranger, "I never saw him in my life, but my wife and daughter met him when he was on his way to Mr. McGuffin's to work, and took quite an interest in the lad. In fact," continued the stranger, "I was well acquainted with his father many years ago, and also am well acquainted with the lad's grandfather, who is still alive, and who, I know, would be only too happy to find this boy, Penfield Pembrooke."

"Hit's a sort of a kindness, you know, that you want to do for the boy, his hit?" interrogatively replied Tobs.

"Yes, sir, that's it, exactly," said the stranger.

"I believe," said Tobs, "that your name is Baines."

"Yes, sir; that's my name. But may I inquire how you knew it?"

"Why, the lad 'ad a Bible, you know," replied Tobs, "that was given him by Lillie Baines, han he talked a

good deal about your wife's han daughter's kindness to 'im, sir."

"May I inquire what your name is?" asked Mr. Baine.

"George Tobias, hat your service, sir," replied Tobs.

"Tobias—Tobias," repeated Mr. Baine, "I once knew a gentleman by that name, but he has been dead a great many years."

"Well, now Hi want to know," said Tobs. "Hi 'ad a brother who came to America over thirty years hago; 'e was several years holder than Hi, and Hi 'eard 'e was dead when Hi came back from the Heast Hindies, where Hi spent several years hof my life. Also 'eard that 'is wife and only child were dead."

"What was your brother's name?" inquired Mr. Baine, considerably interested.

"'Enry, sir; 'Enry Tobias."

"And you," said Mr. Baine, "are Henry Tobias's brother?"

"Hi certainly ham, sir," responded Tobs.

"Mr. George Tobias," said Mr. Baine, "give me your hand until I congratulate you on the good news which I have for you."

The two shook hands warmly. Mr. Baine was all of a flurry, and Tobs was all eagerness to hear.

They headed their horses toward the Mills, and as they rode slowly along Mr. Baine spoke as follows:

"Many years ago, when I was a young unmarried man, an Englishman and his wife came to the little New England village where I lived. His name was Henry Tobias. At that time they had one child, a baby boy, who was born on the sea as they came over.

"They had considerable money and for a time seemed to prosper. After several years went by they had a daughter born to them, whom they named Cinderilla, but at once abridged the name to 'Rilla——"

"My mother's name," interrupted Tobs, as he brushed a tear from his bearded cheek.

"The boy's name," continued Mr. Baine, "was Richard."

"My father's name," again interrupted Tobs; and again his sleeve was brought up to his face.

"Well," Mr. Baine went on, "soon after this your brother lost all his property in some unwise speculation, and the old adage that trouble and adversity never come single-handed seemed especially true in his case. Before the little girl, 'Rilla, was two years old, your brother's wife sickened and died, and soon after your brother died also, and the children found a home with good, kind-hearted Mr. Penfield Pembrooke, the grandfather of this lad I am looking for. Your niece, Mr. Tobias, is now a fine, intelligent woman of about three and twenty, and still lives with old Grandfather Pembrooke.

"I might go farther explain to you why this little lad Pembrooke is a wanderer, as it were, without a home —at least he don't know that he has one."

"Yes, he does," said Tobs. "He told me that he 'ad people Heast, han 'e knew hof 'em, but they didn't know hof 'im."

"I wonder," said Mr. Baine, half to himself, "how he could have found it out." Then turning to Tobs he continued: "Well, prior to your brother's death, I married my wife, a Miss Clara Macley, who had a twin sister by the name of Bertha Macley, who was courted and finally married by Leroy Pembrooke, this lad's father. This marriage was much against old Mr. Macley's wishes, and a few months later a terrible murder and robbery of the most aggravating character was committed, and old Mr. Macley was the victim.

"Circumstantial evidence was very strong against Leroy Pembrooke; in fact, had it come to trial, I am sure he would have been convicted, but he established his own guilt by mysteriously disappearing. Nothing was ever heard of him from that day until my wife and daughter by accident met his child in the stage coach, and from him we learned that his father had recently died.

"Shortly after the murder I carried out the plans that for several years I had been contemplating, and came West, settling in Illinois on the farm where I now live,

less than a hundred miles west of Chicago, and am glad to say that in worldly affairs I have been very prosperous."

When he had concluded he took his handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the perspiration from his brow, and they rode along for a time in silence. Nor was another word spoken until after the stables were reached, and the horses stabled away, and they had gained the seclusion of Mr. Baine's room at the inn.

Then Tobs inquired about his nephew, Richard Tobias. "You 'ave told me, sir, about my niece," said Tobs, "but you 'aven't told me hof my nephew, you know."

"Well, that Mr. Tobias," replied Mr. Baine, "is the unpleasant part of it. Your nephew, Richard Tobias, was a very intelligent and promising young man, and at twenty was occupying a responsible position in a large wholesale house in New York City; but he got to keeping bad company, all brought about, I have been told, through his love of strong drink. He was frequently entrusted with collections that amounted to large sums of money. On a fatal evening, when he had no small sum of his employer's money with him, he met some disreputable characters in a saloon, and got to drinking, was drugged and robbed of every penny.

"When he awoke next morning, and found what had happened, he went to his employers, and in great humiliation told them the facts, and promised to remain and pay it back though it took years of toil; but they were of an aristocratic class of men, wholly destitute of any spirit of forgiveness, and they not only turned him away but followed him up, wherever he tried for work, and gave him such a character that all avenues were closed against him. Then he made his greatest mistake. He ought to have returned to Grandfather Pembrooke, who is one of the most forgiving men in the world, but he was too proud to do that; he still had hopes, no doubt, that he would at last succeed, and perhaps he would have succeeded had not his appetite for liquor been so strong.

"In time he got down so low that he had nothing

and when a few dimes did fall into his hands he spent them at the bar.

"At last he was arrested, with a number of other associates, for breaking the peace in some drunken brawl, and as he had no money with which to pay his fine, he had to work it out on the streets.

"From then on all trace of him is lost. It was reported that he was associated with a gang of thieves along the Ohio river, but that was several years ago. Whether he is dead or alive now, I cannot tell; much that I have told you is but rumors that have reached my ears from time to time when visiting at my old New England home.

"I ship stock to New York twice a year, and always go up to my old home and visit a few days, and usually make my head-quarters at such times with Grandfather Pembrooke. Now, Mr. Tobias," said Mr. Baine, "I would like to hear all you can tell me about the lad, Penfield Pembrooke."

Tobs told him all that he knew about the boy and the letter that he had received, and also told him of his own loss and what his suspicions were concerning Mr. McGuffin.

"McGuffin," said Mr. Baine, "why, that is the name of a family who lived in the same neighborhood I did in the East.

"They were hard cases too. One of them, Henry McGuffin, served a term in the penitentiary. He had a brother by the name of Charles, but nothing ever came out against him that I remember of, but, from what you tell me, I am inclined to think that he is up to something."

Tobs said that he would like very much to see his niece, 'Rilla Tobias, but he was unable to go where she lived, for the want of funds, and he felt that he ought to remain and watch McGuffin, and try to recover his loss.

"I was just a going to suggest," said Mr. Baine, "that you accompany me home to Dairyfield farm. Not only myself but my family would make you most

welcome, and further, I could give you employment and pay you good wages.

"We are expecting," he continued, "our niece, Miss Kitty Pembrooke, to visit us this winter, and I am well satisfied Miss 'Rilla will accompany her, for they have never been separated from childhood up, played together and attended school together. Kitty is Leroy Pembrooke's child by his first wife, who died when she was still a mere child."

But Tobs felt that for the present it was best for him to stay and look after his interests and McGuffin. It was finally arranged that Mr. Baine was to write Tobs after he went East, the first of the November following, and, if the young ladies concluded to accompany him home, Tobs was to come at once to Dairyfield Farm and visit them.

The arrangements being finally agreed upon, the two men shook hands warmly, Tobs agreeing to let Mr. Baine know at once if anything further was heard of Pen.

Tobs mounted his horse and rode slowly and thoughtfully home, censuring himself severely for ever having let Pen follow McGuffin.

The days and weeks wore by without anything further happening or any word coming from Pen.

At last, in the early days of November, there came a letter to the Mills for Tobs, and when he received it from old Tim, that gentleman officiously said:

"Sure, an' Tobs, you see, I was afther being as good as me word. I gave it over into no one's hands but your own, sure."

Tobs was not long in breaking the seal and reading the letter, which ran as follows:

"November 3d, 18—.

"MR. GEORGE TOBIAS:

"Dear Sir and Friend,—I arrived at Grandfather Pembrooke's last evening, and found them quite well. The young ladies had made all necessary preparations to accompany me home. You have no idea what a scene of happiness followed, when I told 'Rilla of you, and

Grandfather Pembrooke, and Kitty of Little Pen, Leroy's son. Grandfather actually wept for joy, and I thought the young ladies would smother me with kisses for the glad news I brought them. 'Rilla says: 'To think I have an uncle George;' while Kittie exclaims: 'To think that I have a little brother Penfield, your namesake, grandfather,' she says to the old man.

"The only chilly wind that blows in the household is the suspense felt about little Pen, but I tell them that you are on the lookout, and I have no doubt will have news for us when you come to Dairyfield Farm.

"We will start for my home to-morrow, and all want you to come at once. Hoping to meet you soon at my home, I am,

"Most truly and sincerely yours,

"STEPHEN BAINE.

"P. S. I found a splendid market for my stock, and feel jubilant. S. B."

When Tobs finished reading his letter he found himself weeping like a child. To think that there was anybody in the wide world who would be glad to see him was so at variance with the past dozen years of his life that the news seemed too good to be true.

"Faith, now," said Tim, who happening back in his store found Tobs in tears, "faith now an' what could have been afther happening to ye, Tobs? I hope no one is dead, sure,"

Tobs told Tim Mannahan the contents of the letter in a confidential tone, and old Tim rejoiced with him at his great good fortune. The old Irishman insisted that he should furnish Tobs with money to defray all expenses in travel and a new suit of clothes, which Tim declared should be made by a Chicago tailor, and further, that he had been wanting to go to Chicago himself, and he would go along with him that far and see to it himself that he was properly and fashionably provided for.

For which kindness Tobs thanked him warmly, and promised to repay the money as soon as it possible.

The following morning Tobs took his leave of Mr. McGuffin, much against that individual's wish; but when

Tobs said he was going to see about getting evidence to establish his claim, and that he would not be gone long, the Phenomenal gave in, though he protested that Tobs ought to confide more in him than he did.

Tobs remarked that he disliked to bother a gentleman like Mr. McGuffin with his own comparatively small affairs, but he would tell him soon, when a convenient opportunity came, all about his expectations, and perhaps Mr. McGuffin, who knew so much about business, could help him in the affair.

This put the Phenomenal McGuffin in a pleasant frame of mind, contemplating his own importance, and he finally bid Tobs good-by with a condescending air that was quite noticeable.

When he got to the Mills, the stage-coach had just drawn up, and soon after, he and old Tim were seated within the old shackly vehicle, bound for the nearest railroad station, which was several miles away, where they proposed to change the lumbering stage for conveniences found in a railway car, in which they would continue their travels Chicago-ward.

CHAPTER XI.

FOURTEEN THOUSAND DOLLARS MISSING. THE INIMITABLE THROWN IN JAIL.

WE will leave Tobs, or George Tobias, as we should now call him, traveling on toward Dairyfield Farm, and turn to Uncle Stephen Baine and the young ladies who are accompanying him home.

In a preceding chapter we caught sight of them for a short time at the Hampton depot, where, after waiting a tedious hour, they finally got aboard the Chicago train and continued their journey. Before going far, Mr. Baine discovered that his carpet-satchel was gone which contained his money.

The pay for several car-loads of stock was in the satchel, and where could he have lost it? He mentally formed his plans before saying a word to the young ladies about his loss, and when he did explain to them they remembered that he had the satchel when they got off the St. Louis Express, and when they went into the Hampton depot, but after that nothing could be remembered of it.

The only thing left for Stephen Baine to do was to unload himself of his many bundles, call the conductor and give the young ladies over into his charge, get off at the next station and hunt up the lost satchel. The programme was carried out, and soon after a message flashed over the wires to Hampton.

When the Inimitable and Lin could find nothing of the satchel, a message was sent back as follows :

"HAMPTON, Nov. 7th, 18—.

"To Stephen Baine :

"No satchel can be found.

"EDWARD WILLETS,

"Operator."

Mr. Baine was one of those individuals who are full of veneration and noted for kindness of heart and many charitable acts, but when fully aroused he had great determination and persistence of character, and now he began to feel that it was time for him to act decidedly and with great promptness. He therefore caused the following message to be sent at once :

"To Edward Willets, Operator :

"Satchel was left in Hampton depot and unless you produce it there will be trouble.

"STEPHEN BAINE."

It so happened that the station where Mr. Baine was sending these messages from was a county seat, and he forthwith hunted up the sheriff and awoke him from a sound nap, requesting that official to accompany him to Hampton.

A hand-car was then provided by the gentlemanly station agent, and soon the sheriff and Mr. Baine, in company with a couple of section-men, were spinning along at hand-car speed toward Hampton.

When the Inimitable received Mr. Baine's last message he was almost beside himself with fright.

"I tell you, my boy," said he to Lin, "there was no satchel left here or it would be here now. I stopped out in the waiting room before going up town, after the Chicago train pulled out, and if there had been any satchel out there I certainly would have seen it."

"No doubt, Mr. Willets," said Lin, "you would have noticed it the first thing, if there had been a satchel there. I distinctly remember that you stopped a few moments in the waiting room when you last went uptown."

"I stopped a moment by the stove to fasten my overcoat." Then suddenly assuming a thoughtful look, he studied a moment, and said: "I have it, I have the solution, my charming boy. It is now plain to me, and the gathering mist will soon be cleared away."

"How," asked Lin calmly.

"Why, this old chap, Baine, left his precious treasure on the St. Louis train. All I have to do, sir, is to consult my time table to ascertain the probable whereabouts of that flying meteor, ordinarily called the St. Louis Express, and send a message to the station ahead of it addressed to the conductor, explaining the circumstances, and soon the satchel will be taken charge of by some trusty brother railroad official of mine, and all will be well; the goose dangling from the topmost pinnacle of a satisfactory explanation; a perfect understanding and an unalloyed happiness.

"But first I will write a note to your sister, Miss Edith, who is certainly a charming dancer, and explain the cause of my absence."

He then hastily wrote a note, and folding it up, continued: "Now, my boy, if you will be kind enough to go up to the ball-room and give this to your sister, I will be yours to death, Edward Willets, Esq."

Soon after the Inimitable was calling away for a station in advance of the St. Louis Express train, and Lin was hurrying along the deserted streets of the vil-

lage toward the ball-room. The dancing hall was in the second story of a large wooden building. It had a stage-like rostrum at one end, with a large drop curtain in front, on which was painted numerous faded advertisements in a great many different shades of color, and which undoubtedly would have compared favorably for diversity with "Joseph's Coat;" or a reader of Dickens might have thought that one of the famous "Bill Stickers" had been doing a thriving business. When the drop curtain was down, and there was nothing on the boards, the room was frequently cleared of its seating furniture, answering the purpose of a ball-room, and was so occupied on this particular night.

When Lin came opposite the hall he paused in the shadow of an old building, and listened to the stirring strains of sweet music, and watched the whirling forms pass the lighted windows in a mazy waltz.

Within all was life and merriment. Sparkling, laughing eyes that spoke volumes in a single look, witticisms, rich compliments to fair ladies, easy, graceful gestures, with light and airy step—all were there—and thus the hours had worn on from early evening, blending all into a glow of happiness.

Our little friend could not help stopping for a moment to feast his ears on the strains of harmonious music, and his eyes on scenes of merriment, but it was only for a few moments, and then he hurried across the street and up the steps. Soon after, having found his sister and delivered Willets' note, he returned to the open street, crossed over, and again watched the dancers. Presently he turned and looked westward.

The old moon, which was in the last quarter, was almost to the horizon; ever and anon a black cloud would pass hurriedly over its face, wholly hiding it from view, and then suddenly it would look out at him, as if it would say, "Such is life, my boy; none so happy, no life so sunny that occasionally a shadow will not flit across it. But if the children of men, like me, are far above the smirching clouds of trouble, then will they again shine forth with renewed luster after the blackened clouds have passed away."

Of what is the boy thinking, as he stands there so still and motionless? Does the old moon tell him that earth and sea, air and sky, are the handiwork of a Creator? Does it tell him that all created things, both animate and inanimate, in the deep sea or on the broad land, are witnesses to prove that there is a Creator? Or does the boy still cling to his dead father's belief, which was a skeptical philosophy wholly unable to discover any soul in the human mechanism?

Lin had read and re-read the books his father had left treating on this subject, and he firmly disbelieved the theory of a separate spiritual existence, regarding it as a mythological tradition which modern science had wholly routed from its stronghold.

The night was clear and still. Suddenly the rumble of cars fell on his ears, and he hastened back to the depot.

The Inimitable had changed his sanguine look of hopefulness to a crestfallen look of dejection.

"Lin, my aspiring boy," he said, "there was no satchel on the St. Louis Meteor, and I am in a distressingly unrelishable situation. I feel as if my bark was headed with lightning speed toward a whirlpool of startling width and depth."

"Hadn't you better run away, Mr. Willets?" asked Lin.

"No, my sympathizing companion, no," said Willets; "that would establish my guilt."

"Your what?" asked Lin, quickly.

"It would look, sir," replied the Inimitable, "as though I was guilty of a crime, one which my poetic soul spurns with scorn."

Just then the tramp of feet was heard, and a moment later the door opened, and in stepped three stalwart-looking men.

It seemed that Mr. Baine and crew came to the outskirts of the village, and there he and the sheriff got off and sent the other two men back with the car. They then proceeded to the deputy sheriff's house, who was a resident of Hampton, and together they made their way to the depot.

When they came walking in, the Inimitable's self-

possession almost wholly deserted him, and his agitation was very noticeable. His burning face and confused speech caused Mr. Baine's attendants to look at each other and smilingly nod, as much as to say, "We have found our bird."

Mr. Baine was now unincumbered with bundles, and even the pockets in his great coat had been emptied. His slouched hat was pushed back, and his very look was that of a man who proposed to win.

"Is this Mr. Edward Willets, night operator?" he asked, in a clear, pleasant, yet firm voice.

"Yes, sir, that is my name," replied Willets; "and may I inquire," he continued, "whom I have the honor, sir, of addressing?"

"My name is Baine, Stephen Baine," was the reply; "and now, Mr. Willets, if you will be kind enough to hand over that satchel I left here in this waiting-room less than two hours ago, I will not only be much obliged, but will suffer you to go unpunished."

"Mr. Baine," said Willets, "it is with unfeigned sorrow, sir, on my part, to meet you under such unpoetic circumstances, especially as I am obliged to inform you, my dear sir, that I know nothing of your satchel, though I am free to confess that it would afford me inexpressible happiness to be the humble instrument through which you might regain possession of that which is lost."

"Do I understand you to say," inquired Mr. Baine, "that you positively have seen nothing of the satchel since I boarded the Chicago train?"

"That, sir," said Willets, "is the purport of such information as I was desirous, in my humble way, of communicating to your intelligent mind."

"Never mind, Mr. Willets," said Mr. Baine, "never mind so much useless lingo. Your answers 'yes' and 'no' would be far more acceptable. The facts are these," he continued, "I have lost a satchel in which were fourteen thousand dollars, and I have come back to this station because I am certain this is the place my satchel and I parted company. I feel that I was hasty and unwise in wording my first message. Had I not been somewhat

excited I would not have named its contents. I am no lawyer, neither do I know much of any law more than that which a just respect and honorable dealing toward all men teaches me. I wish now to ask you a few questions, which will be to the point, and in turn I want you to answer in few words and to the point ; after that I will leave the whole affair with these two gentlemen, who are sheriff and deputy sheriff of this county."

"Now, sir," continued Mr. Baine, "was there any other person or persons with you in this building when I left it at one o'clock this morning?"

Willets was by this time well nigh frightened to death, and in reply to the question, he stammered out: "No—Yes—I don't know ;—there was a boy here, I believe, sir."

"Where is he and who is he?" inquired Mr. Baine.

Lin stepped forward at this, and in a voice that was clear and musical, perfectly free from any tremor of agitation, said : "I am the boy, and my name is Lin Brinkerhoff."

The three men looked at the lad, and the deputy sheriff whispered to his principal, "That boy is straight—nothing crooked about him."

"Was there any one else here?" inquired Mr. Baine.

"No, sir," responded both Willets and Lin in unison.

"Very well," said Mr. Baine. Then turning to the officers, he continued : "Gentlemen, I command you to place both Edward Willets and the boy, Lin Brinkerhoff, under arrest. I will employ an attorney, and we will have a preliminary hearing as soon as possible this morning. It is already half-past three o'clock."

The deputy sheriff was a near neighbor of Mrs. Brinkerhoff and he protested aside with Mr. Baine that the boy ought not to be arrested. But all to no purpose, for Mr. Baine had made up his mind and that was the end of it.

The following morning, when the fact of their arrest became known, there was one of the greatest commotions ever witnessed in Hampton. Because Willets was

arrested, was sufficient evidence for many of them to believe him guilty.

The whole town, however was indignant at Lin's arrest. Some of the hot-blooded went so far as to say that the man who had him arrested ought to be strung up, and that they would be one of a dozen who would do it. But this talk and feeling gradually gave way to reason and better judgment, and the preliminary trial commenced. When it was finished it resulted in Lin Brinkerhoff being dismissed and Edward Willets held to await the action of the grand jury, charged with the crime of stealing a certain satchel, containing fourteen thousand dollars.

The findings of the preliminary examination were highly satisfactory to every one, generally speaking. True, there were some who could not make up their minds to believe that Mr. Willets would be guilty of such an act, while the majority would knowingly turn to their neighbors at their elbows and say: "What did I tell you?" and "I told you so;" or ask sneeringly, "What did I tell you about Willets when he first came to Hampton?"

At noon that day another operator came on to take Willets place, with whom Lin continued his studies as if nothing had happened.

While it is true that the only evidence against Willets was circumstantial, yet public sentiment was so decidedly against him that an impartial jury could not have been empaneled from the residents of Hampton.

He wrote dozens of letters, overflowing with adjectives, imploring even those with whom he had but the slightest acquaintance to intercede for his immediate release from prison, but all to no purpose.

Every letter he wrote, and every pound of flesh he lost in his ceaseless worry, added strength to the current belief that he was guilty. Very pious, rustling-silk-religious people, who pandered to the power of wealth, said that they certainly believed Mr. Baine, the wealthy farmer and stock shipper, had been the victim of a shameful robbery, and that Edward Willets was, beyond a

doubt the thief, and that his prompt arrest was but a just retribution for his wickedness.

They also said that in the whole affair they could see the workings of a Divine Providence, and they sincerely hoped that it would serve as a striking example to others who were disposed to be sinful.

There was another class whose religion prompted them to pray earnestly that the guilty might be punished, but that no one who was innocent should be made to unjustly suffer. They held their peace, and said to those about them, "Judge not, lest ye be judged." There were still those of another class, who cared but little about religion in any form, but who were very susceptible to the power of money, who reasoned that if Willets had stolen the satchel, it was undoubtedly hidden somewhere in the vicinity of the depot, or buried in some of the vacant cellars underneath unoccupied buildings; and while this class were far less busy talking than some of their highly pretentious, religious neighbors, they were by no means inactive, looking and searching in every imaginable place, and some places that were not reasonably imaginable, for the stolen wealth; turning over planks, taking up the floors of deserted buildings, digging over the bottoms of damp cellars, and making themselves generally useful in trying to find the stock shipper's wealth.

It is not, however, at all certain that Mr. Baine would have been any the wiser, or any the richer, if some of these restless prospectors should have found the treasure for which they were looking.

The Inimitable had sent several notes to Zurilda Goodsil requesting her to come and see him. Finally, one morning after he had been confined about a week in the town jail, the spinster set out with many misgivings to call on her ex-boarder.

When she was admitted into his presence, and saw how worn and haggard he looked, she could not refrain from bringing the corner of her apron to her face and shedding tears.

"Oh, Mr. Willets," she said, "how could you do such a wicked thing?"

"Miss Goodsil," replied Willets, in a woe-begone tone, that compared very favorably with his looks, "I am not guilty of the heinous and heretofore unparalleled crime among our brotherhood, of which I have been accused.

"Oh, Mr. Willets," the spinster sighed, "it looks as if you were guilty."

"My dear madam," said Willets, "is it possible—is it, I say, possible—that you, too, believe me guilty, even after I have personally communicated to you the intelligence that I am as innocent of this crime as a prattling babe?"

"Oh, it looks that way," said the spinster between her sobs.

"Then, indeed," said Willets, "am I an unhappy man. My bark, Miss Goodsil, in which my hopes were freighted, was on the very brink of an engulfing whirlpool when you came, and now it has plunged over into the abyss of foaming, fretful waters, and this instant is a thousand fathoms below the dead level of a calm sea. Don't speak to me, Miss Goodsil, don't, don't, but withdraw from my sight and leave me alone, a crushed and withering fuchsia."

The spinster was very much affected when she withdrew, and said to the jailer that she really believed Mr. Willets was going crazy.

The keeper made her no reply, and she hastened away, stopping, however, to gossip at several houses before reaching home. When she at last arrived at her cottage, she was tired out, she said, with fatigue and excitement, but her mind was made up to one thing, and that was Edward Willets was indeed most guilty, leastways in her opinion, and she hoped he would suffer the full penalty of the law.

CHAPTER XII.

DAIRYFIELD FARM.

MR. STEPHEN BAINE left Hampton as soon as Edward Willets was committed to prison, and went straight to Chicago. He at once hunted up an old schoolmate, one Horatio Westover, a lawyer of considerable note in that metropolis.

Mr. Westover was seated at his desk in his well-furnished office, before a grate where a fire was burning to keep off the chill of the November weather.

He was a man of perhaps five and forty, although the iron-gray hair and beard would have said five and fifty.

As Mr. Baine came in, he rose and greeted him warmly. The greeting was soon over, and the usual inquiries made and answered concerning the health of each, and their respective families. Mr. Baine then laid his case before the lawyer, giving him a full and careful account of the whole business, from first to last.

"You have given me," said Mr. Westover, when his client ceased talking, "a very careful account, but you have not said who you really think is the guilty party."

"That," said Mr. Baine, "is a very hard question, one that I have been trying to decide in my own mind ever since I left Hampton. I have an impression that this boy, Lin Brinkerhoff, notwithstanding he was dismissed, knows something of the matter. I am free to say, however, that my belief is mainly based on impressions."

"From the evidence that was introduced," said Mr. Westover, "I doubt very much if the grand jury find an indictment against this man, Edward Willets. All the evidence seems to be circumstantial, and that very superficial."

"I guess," said Mr. Baine, "that is about the truth, but you would be astonished, Westover—you would, indeed—to see what a strong hold that boy has on the

people of Hampton. Why, some of them even talked of treating me to mob violence because I had him arrested."

"What you want, Mr. Baine," said the lawyer, "is to recover your money. If we can succeed in that we will have done bravely, and we can then punish the guilty and remove all suspicions from the innocent."

"Who do you think is the thief, Mr. Westover," inquired Mr. Baine, "from all the facts that I have given you?"

"That is a very delicate question," replied the attorney, "but something tells me that Edward Willets is the man."

"Well," said Mr. Baine, "I do not want to wrong the innocent—far from it; I would much rather lose the money than be the cause of an innocent man or boy suffering."

The lawyer seemingly paid no attention to this last remark, but sat looking deep into the burning grate, before which they were seated, in a thoughtful attitude, for several minutes, finally his countenance brightened, and, turning to Mr. Baine, he said: "How would this do? Suppose you withdraw this suit against Willets, the operator, and I will see the officials of the railroad company, and we will have him put to work again at Hampton, and trust the case to the skill of a detective. In this way we will probably recover the money, and, in doing so, obtain the necessary proof to convict the guilty party."

"That suits me," said Mr. Baine, with great emphasis, and, to make his earnestness still more emphatic, he brought his hand down so hard on the lawyer's shoulder that he winced, as if from pain.

"That suits me," repeated Mr. Baine, "that idea of a detective is splendid. You are a cool-headed lawyer, Westover, you are indeed."

There was enough of a compliment in this last remark to partially offset the smarting blow, and he remarked that he was glad that the suggestion pleased Mr. Baine.

While he was saying this he arose and quietly moved

his chair a few feet further away, fearing, no doubt, that his old friend and client might renew his emphatic form of speech.

After an hour's conversation, it was agreed that the lawyer's suggestion should be the policy on which they would work.

Then Mr. Baine took his leave. About noon the following day, he took passage in an outgoing train and wheeled away toward Dairyfield Farm, thinking, no doubt, far more about the stock that he would ship the following June than he did about the money he had lost. Perhaps his belief that the loss was only a temporary matter in part accounted for his apparent happy state of mind, or perhaps it was in anticipation of returning home where so many were waiting eagerly for his coming.

The afternoon was wearing away when he reached the station where he was to leave the cars.

"Hello, father, you're here at last?" were the cheery words that met his ears as he stepped from the railway coach.

"Here, at last, Harry my boy!" was Mr. Baine's prompt reply, as he grasped the outstretched hand of a fine-looking young man of not more than twenty.

"I have met every train, father, since cousin Kittie and her friend arrived," said the young man.

"Well, did you find anybody else," inquired Mr. Baine, "beside the young ladies, who were bound for the farm?"

"Yes, sir," answered the young man. "The next day after their arrival Mr. George Tobias came, and I tell you they are having splendid times."

"It made me feel as if I would enjoy being an uncle myself, if I could have such a niece as 'Rilla Tobias." This last remark was said in a half-laughing way, but nevertheless Mr. Baine thought he detected a ring of earnestness in his son's remark.

"She is a fine young lady, my boy," replied Mr Baine.

While this conversation was going on they had seated themselves in a comfortable carriage, and were driv-

ing rapidly homeward. Although it was now that season of the year when sleighs ought to be used, no snow had as yet put in an appearance.

Harry Baine was a fine-looking young man, almost six feet in height, straight as an arrow and well proportioned. Hair black as the raven's wing clustered about his broad full forehead, underneath which was a pair of brown eyes, clear and pleasant, and finely chiseled features that bore an impress of open frankness. The nose was of a Grecian mould, and betokened refinement, while the square, full chin gave evidence of strength of character.

Mr. Baine and his wife, like all parents, were very proud of their two children, and had taken great pains to imbue into them principles of truthfulness and honor, and they had been successful. Any one not acquainted with the family, however, would never have suspected that blue-eyed and golden-tressed Lillie Baine was a sister of Harry's, so different were their general features.

The sun was just sinking behind the western horizon, when Harry drew rein in front of the gateway that led up to the farm-house. It was a two-story structure, with a square top. Its color was white, and the window shutters were painted green. A broad lawn sloped down to the road in front, dotted over with trees through which were winding walks, and all inclosed with a picket fence, neatly painted white.

Many of the trees that adorned the yard were evergreens, and even on a November day presented a comfortable look that was very suggestive of its Summer time beauty.

That night, seated around the cheerful glow of an open grate, Mr. Baine related all the circumstances of his loss; told who were suspected and what steps had been taken; and that, after consulting with his attorney, he had made up his mind to release the operator Willets. He was very careful not to say anything about having made arrangements to have suspected parties shadowed by a detective.

When he was speaking of Edward Willets, 'Rilla looked hard at the burning coal on the grate, and Kittie

only dared to steal a single glance at her face, which she saw was clouded with sorrow; but when Mr. Baine spoke of his release, 'Rilla's face seemed to brighten. When he had finished speaking Kittie said:

"Uncle Stephen, you do not think that this Mr. Willets is guilty, do you?"

"I do not suspect anyone in particular, Kittie," said Mr. Baine.

Tobs listened to the narration with marked attention, and when 'Rilla turned to him, and said, "Uncle George, who do you think took the satchel?" he was ready to answer:

"Hi think," said he, "that hif Hi was at 'ome and knew whether C. McGuffin, Esq., was away that night or not, Hi could hanswer better, you know."

It was evident that there was no crime in the whole list of felony that Tobs thought too great for his old employer to engage in. "Hi don't think," he continued, "that this man, Willets, stole the money."

"What makes you think he is innocent?" inquired Mr. Baine.

"Well, you know," replied Tobs, "he was deucedly kind 'arted to little Pen. Gave 'im twenty dollars the day he left 'Ampton."

"Gave him twenty dollars!" exclaimed Mrs. Baine.

"That's what I said, you know," replied Tobs.

"Well, now, wasn't that kind of him?" said Mrs. Baine.

"Surely, Stephen, Mr. Willets has some good qualities. He has a kind and generous heart, I am sure."

"My mind is made up," said Kittie, and her eyes flashed admiration, while her cheeks bathed themselves in a flush of excitement at the mention of Pen's name.

"I feel certain," she continued, "that no one who was so considerate toward my little brother could possibly be guilty of such a crime as stealing. No, until he is proven guilty, I will believe him innocent."

"Nobly spoken, my handsome Kittie," said Mr. Baine, "but you have forgotten that I told you I had withdrawn my charges against this man Willets; and he

is not only to be set at liberty, but he is to be reinstated in his former position."

All this time 'Rilla said nothing, but her burning cheeks plainly told that she was thinking earnestly, and, at the same time, listening to every word that was spoken.

Harry drew his chair near her, and tried to engage in some light conversation, but 'Rilla proved very uncompanionable. Presently he left her to her own thoughts, and turned to Kittie, who was always ready to do her part in entertaining her handsome Cousin Harry.

After an hour's pleasant conversation, Mr. Baine excused himself and withdrew to the library, where he found a bright fire blazing in the grate. He wished to make some memoranda of expenses, and also write a few business letters.

An hour after there came a gentle knock at the door, which was slightly ajar, and the handsome face of Kittie Pembrooke looked in.

"Can I come in, Uncle Stephen?" she hesitatingly inquired.

"Certainly, Kittie, come in," said Mr. Baine, in his good natured way. "I suppose you want to talk with me about little Pen?"

"Yes, I wanted to talk with you about him, and then there was another subject I wished to speak to you of."

At Uncle Stephen's request she seated herself in one of the easy chairs, and turning her handsome face to him, said: "Uncle Stephen, I hope you will not think I am presuming or interfering with any of your plans, when I tell you that I know Mr. Willets never took your money."

"How do you know that?" quickly inquired Mr. Baine.

"Perhaps," she replied, "I express myself in too strong terms when I say that I *know*. I should have said that I am certain in my own mind that Mr. Willets is an honorable man."

"What makes you think so, Kittie?" asked Mr. Baine.

"That, Uncle, is just what I am a going to tell you. When 'Rilla and I first went away to the Seminary, we met a young lady student there by the name of Emily Willets. She was a couple of years younger than myself, and I am candid and sincere when I tell you she was the handsomest person I ever saw in my life. She was a blonde in everything but her eyes,—they were lustrous black; but what added most to her loveliness was her gentle ways, her kind words, her evenness of temper, her reticence, and her queenly deportment. There was not a young lady in the Seminary but knew she was, by far, the handsomest student there: yet, strange as it may seem, she was a favorite. No one envied her beauty, or, if they did, they did not blame her for her lovely face. She had a smile and a kind word for every one, and then she was such a bright scholar.

"Well, she told us of her brother Edward and a married sister, her only relatives. The former of whom she said paid her expenses at the Seminary.

"Her sister had been married several years, and lived in Cinapolis, and her husband, Mr. Dorris, was an employé in a large foundry at that place. Her brother Edward was a telegraph operator. I also learned that prior to her parents' death, which happened when she was a little child, they lived in New York City, and for years enjoyed all the comforts that wealth could purchase.

"Her father was a very proud man, and her mother, I should judge, from what Emily told me, was a very delicate woman who could not endure calamity. Mr. Willets, her father, speculated heavily on Wall Street, and had done so for years. In fact, it was there he had made his wealth. But there came a day when disaster and utter ruin overtook him, and he found himself penniless. The blow was too much for his proud spirit, and it broke him down in death, and his wife quickly followed. I only speak of her parents to explain how she was left an orphan.

"Her brother Edward came to visit her often, and was far from resembling his handsome sister in face or physique. He was tall and angular, had a fiery head of

red hair, and was anything but handsome; but he had a very fluent way of expressing himself, and then he was Emily's brother. For my own part I never was even introduced to him, but 'Rilla met him, and in time a great attachment sprang up between them. She came to me one day and confided her secret, and wanted my advice, as she always does about everything, although I am several years her junior. My advice to her was to dismiss such thoughts as marrying, from her mind and wait until our school life was ended. She followed my advice and gave Edward Willets her promise to always be his friend, and when her school days were over she would try and gain her guardian's consent; then she would receive him at Grandfather Pembrooke's, where they would renew their friendship, that, until then, must cease.

"Emily Willets was one year in advance of 'Rilla and myself in her studies. In the early days of June, before she graduated, there was a cowardly murder committed near the station where her brother was operator. There was a great deal said about it at the time, and the papers were full of the tragedy.

"It happened in this wise." Here Kittie paused in her narration, and looking up from the glowing grate, said: "I hope, Uncle, I am not tiring you?"

"No, no," replied Mr. Baine, "go on; I am very much interested."

"Thank you, Uncle Stephen; I was fearful that I was growing tedious. Well, as I was saying," she continued, "it happened, as near as I remember, in this wise:

"On a certain evening, Mr. Bethel, a merchant of the village where Edward Willets was operator, came into the station and said he was going to the city to purchase goods. Mr. Willets and the gentleman were well acquainted, and chatted away for some time, and among other things Mr. Bethel remarked that he paid cash for his goods, and in that way bought his merchandise at better prices than his competitors did. Just as he made this remark, they heard a shuffling noise, and, looking up, they saw they had company. As soon

as the stranger was discovered, he came up to the ticket office window and bought a ticket for New York, the same place to which the merchant had purchased one only a moment before. The description given of this strange man I will never forget. The papers said that he looked more like a tramp than a man who was able to purchase a first class ticket.

"He was slightly stooped, and was perhaps fifty years old. His once black hair was rather long and frowsy, and streaked with gray. His face had a dirty look about it, and was covered over with a short bristly beard. His eyes were small and restless. He was all the time trying to smile, more from habit than because he felt as people usually feel when they look pleasant. Well, when the train came in, this stranger and the merchant got in the same car, which, aside from themselves, was entirely vacant.

"The conductor afterwards said he thought this strange man looked more like a felon than any person that ever rode with him. The conductor passed through the car, took up the tickets, and left them alone. They drew up at the next station a moment, and then pushed on. When he next came into the car he found it was empty, and thought it rather strange, as both passengers had tickets for the city. He went on through the car to the back platform, and there lay the dead body of the merchant, Mr. Bethel.

"He was removed from the cars at the next station, and a message sent back to Mr. Willets, who at once aroused Mr. Bethel's family and friends, and on the next train they went after the murdered merchant's body.

"His family said he had a great amount of money with him, but not a cent could be found on his clothing. Over a week after this, Mr. Willets took a walk into the country, and came home by way of the railroad, and as he walked along he spied a wallet laying on the outside of the rails, in the edge of some weeds.

"He picked it up, and upon examination it proved to be the property of the murdered merchant, and contained over five thousand dollars. Now, what do you think Mr. Willets did with the purse?"

"Well, what did he do with it?" asked Mr. Baine, almost impatiently.

"He gave it at once to the merchant's family. The theory of the tragedy was that the strange man had murdered him for his money, but the merchant, in the struggle on the platform of the car, had dropped his wallet, possibly by design, but more likely by accident, and the murderer got only human blood instead of money for his cowardly deed.

"The strange man disappeared, no one knew where, and has never been heard of since."

"That is a strange and very interesting story," said Mr. Baine, "and I will compliment you, Kittie, on being a fine story-teller."

"Thank you, uncle, for the compliment; but my story," she continued, "will amount to nothing unless it has a moral sufficiently apparent for you to plainly see."

Mr. Baine remained silent, and Kittie went on.

"You see, uncle, 'Rilla thinks a great deal of this man Edward Willets, and had she known that place where we waited for the Chicago train so long was Hampton, she would have had quite a visit with him. Knowing as she does the story that I have just narrated to you, she believes Mr. Willets absolutely honest, and his integrity above reproach.

"Now whatever is said, uncle, don't cloud his name with suspicion, for it will make 'Rilla very miserable indeed. Of course, I am very sorry that you lost your money, but I am satisfied that, sooner or later you will recover it, and when you do, all suspicion will be removed from Edward Willets, and the mist that now hangs over him in your thoughts will clear away, and I hope the broad, bright rays of the sun that shine in on your after knowledge will warm into a lasting friendship between you and he."

CHAPTER XIII.

IN WHICH BURT LESTER, THE DETECTIVE, COMMENCES OPERATIONS.

LAWYER Westover, only a few days previous to his interview with Mr. Baine, had accidentally formed the acquaintance of a young man by the name of Herbert Lester, who, though young and possessed of quite a feminine look, had won a reputation on both sides of the Atlantic, as being one of the shrewdest and most successful detectives that was ever entrusted with a case.

He had been pretty well used up a few months prior to the time of which we write, and had, as he termed it, been "laid up for repairs," but now he was about well again, and concluded to do business on his own account for the present, and not connect himself with any agency.

The afternoon of the day following the arrangements between Mr. Baine and the lawyer was drawing to a close, and the eastward shadows were lengthening in the shade of evening. The noisy venders on the street below had ceased their crying clamor, and the loud clatter of many vehicles had lessened and lessened, until now only an occasional rumble could be heard on the stony streets, and then at first so very indistinct that it was hardly noticeable, but it would gradually increase in its noisy approach, growing louder and louder, until it whirled by, and would then in like proportion grow less noisy as it wheeled away and finally dwindled into silence, like the fading of an echo.

Not a soul was in the lawyer's office but the lawyer himself, who was seated in front of the grate, where slumbered half-burned coals.

His right elbow rested on his desk, and with his right hand he supported his chin. The thumb of his left hand was carelessly inserted in the left armhole of his vest. His right foot was as motionless as though it was stone,

while with his left foot he would give an occasional tap on the grated hearth, against which it rested, as if he was keeping the good points of his reverie separate from the worthless ones. At last he gave vent to his thoughts, and said: "That is the true theory, and I will show my friend Baine how much he can count on his impressions. Why, Herbert Lester will run his man down and recover the stolen wealth in such a short time that my old client will be surprised. I am a lucky chap—lucky to have such an acquaintance as Stephen Baine, and lucky to know such a detective as Lester."

Here he rose to his feet, and taking out a gold-cased time-keeper, said, "Almost time he was here. I do wonder if——"

Just here he was interrupted by a knock at the door, and the lawyer called out, "Walk in," with the same breath that he commenced a sentence that was never finished, and in walked Herbert Lester.

Their greeting was formal and business-like, and as the detective seated himself in the offered chair, he drew a letter from his pocket, and as he did so, said: "Your letter, Mr. Westover, was received, and I believe this is the hour you requested my presence."

"Yes, sir," replied Mr. Westover, "I wished to see you on professional business, and——"

Just at this juncture the legal gentleman was attacked with a violent fit of sneezing, which had not only a shaking-up effect, but also served as a reminder that the fire was burning low; in fact, was fast dying into lifeless coals. As soon as the attorney sufficiently recovered himself, he added some fresh kindling and coal, and soon a bright blaze was sparkling on the hearth. The lawyer had several sobering-off sneezes, used his handkerchief rather freely, and finally succeeded in getting back to a normal condition where he could talk business.

Let us first take a glance at the detective, before we listen to their conversation. He is rather young, not more than twenty-five; a smooth-shaven face that is almost too feminine for a man to wear; steel blue eyes that possess a certain quaint expression that would cause

you to think he was disposed to listen attentively, but believe very little of what he heard ; his hair is a dark-brown color and cut short ; in stature he is of medium height and not very stout in his build ; he wears a handsome gray business suit, that becomes him admirably.

"As I was observing," said the lawyer, "I wished to see you professionally. I have a case which I wish to entrust to your skill, if you are not engaged on any other."

"I am at your service, Mr. Westover," said the detective.

Then followed a very careful account of the robbery, all the facts and impressions which the robbed man, Mr. Baine, had, relative to the matter, and how he, Mr. Westover, proposed to see the officials and have Mr. Willets put back to work.

Mr. Herbert Lester was for the most part agreeable to the lawyer's plans, and said he would start at once for Hampton and get the general drift of the feeling of the people, and the general lay of things, before Willets was released.

Accordingly, the detective started that night, and the next day at noon, when the train stopped at Hampton, an old man, rather plainly dressed, stepped off the train. His gray beard and hair compared very favorably with his stooped shoulders and the old-fashioned cane with which he walked. He bent his steps to the village hotel, engaged one of the best rooms in the house, and sent for his large Saratoga. That evening the old man started out with a book under his arm, and commenced soliciting orders for all kinds of fruit and ornamental trees and shrubbery. The book he carried was filled with highly-colored pictures of every kind of fruit imaginable.

The old man canvassed very slowly, and when he got to a house he remained a long time and listened very attentively to all the gossip that was going on. The main theme of the villagers' talk was about a Mr. Willets who stole thousands and thousands of dollars from a farmer and cattle shipper.

A few days later an official of the railroad came to Hampton and astonished the people generally by saying that he did not believe Mr. Willets was guilty, and that he would go and have a talk with him. If he was of the same opinion after having the interview, he certainly should try to have him released.

Most of the villagers believed that Willets would "give himself away," as they termed it, before he talked five minutes with the man.

When the official was admitted, he introduced himself to the hope-deserted Willets, and asked him how he was feeling.

"Feeling?" replied Willets, and then without giving the official time to reply, he continued, "my highly respected superior, I have no feeling. It, sir, was waybilled with my hopes, and my hopes have sunk to rise no more. My race is very nearly run. There was a time, though the memory of it has almost deserted me, when I was a promising house plant, as it were, but to-day I am a thistle on a dung-hill despised and shunned."

"I am truly sorry," said the official, "to find you so low spirited."

"Don't talk to me," said the Inimitable, "of spirit. To explain myself to your intelligent mind, let us for a brief moment suppose the spirit of mortal man to be an egg-shell substance, and a pile-driver hammer of three ton weight should descend with lightning velocity on said heretofore described egg-shell substance. Now where, oh, where, in the devil, would the spirit of mortal man be? You must acknowledge, my esteemed superior, that the spirit would at least be slightly impaired."

"Mr. Willets," said the official, "I came to see you with a view of interceding for your liberty, and if I am successful, to ask you to accept your old position as night operator at this place."

"Is it possible, sir," said Willets, "that you come to see me as a friend? I say, sir, is it possible?"

"I will leave you," said the official, "to judge what my motives toward you are. I shall endeavor to obtain your release and reinstate you in your old position."

The Inimitable rose from his reclining posture, extended his big-jointed bony hand to the official, and the two shook hands.

"My highly esteemed and never to be forgotten friend," said Willets, "you have taken me so much by surprise in this act of unprecedented kindness, that I am wholly at a loss for such words as will adequately express to your superior mind the thoughts that are surging through my heretofore troubled soul, and each clamoring for an outlet. Suffice it, sir, to say, that you shall have your reward in heaven. I have a young friend, my dear official, who is quite a hand at praying, and if I should live to see him, I will insist, with all the eloquence and enthusiasm that my inferior ability can command, that he prays, and prays hard, for you, and, moreover——"

"Mr. Willets," interrupted the official, "if you will excuse me now, I will be going. I know you are not feeling well, and cannot express yourself as fluently as you would like, but you can thank me some other time."

"Just so, my charming official. You think it would be more in keeping with the eternal fitness of things to adjourn the subject, *sine die*, for the immediate present?"

"That is my idea exactly," answered the official. "Good afternoon to you."

"For the present, farewell," said Willets, just as the jail door closed.

As soon as the official emerged from the building, he walked straight to the hotel. After supper that night, if any one could have seen through the close-fitting blinds of the old man's room, he would have seen the official and Herbert Lester, the detective, now unmasked of his old man's disguise, holding a whispered consultation together which lasted fully an hour, Then the official withdrew, and soon after Burt, as he was usually called, was smoking lazily away at his cigar and thinking over his afternoon's work.

The next morning the old man was out early, soliciting orders for fruit trees and shrubbery.

He was walking along slowly with staff in hand,

when he suddenly came face to face with a bright-looking lad. The old man stopped, opened his book, commenced showing the pictures and soliciting an order.

"They are very nice," said the boy, "but I am not able to purchase."

"Well, don't say you will not purchase, but think it over a few days," said the old man as he closed his book.

"I will think it over," said the boy, "but I know we will not purchase."

"What is your name, my lad?"

"Hamlin Brinkerhoff," he replied. "Everybody calls me Lin."

"Why, you are the lad that I heard the people about here say was at the depot that night when the operator stole a lot of money."

"Yes, sir," Lin replied; "I am learning telegraphy."

"I suppose," said the old man, "that there is no doubt that the operator is the thief?"

"Well," said Lin, "it looks that way, though I would not want to give any opinion, for he was very kind to me. He was teaching me telegraphy."

"That's right, that's right!" exclaimed the old man, "never go back on a friend when he is in trouble. Stick to him as long as there is any hope of clearing him."

"May I ask your name?" inquired Lin.

"Yes, my boy. Uncle Jimmie, you may call me; my name is James Drake, I am a poor old man selling fruit trees and all kinds of shrubbery."

"I will wish you success," said Lin, "and bid you good-morning, for I sleep in the day time, as I am up all night. Good-morning to you."

"Good-day, good-day," said the old man, as he hobbled on along the streets.

He soon turned toward the hotel, for as yet he had not breakfasted.

Soon after the noon train arrived from Chicago, the doors of the jail were thrown open, and Edward Willets walked out a free man. That evening at seven o'clock he went on duty as night operator. During the fore-

part of the evening a great many Hamptonians dropped in to congratulate Willets, and assure him they never did believe he was guilty.

The Inimitable took heart at their cheery words, and assured them that he had been of the same opinion himself all along, and now he actually felt convinced of it.

"You are the first person," said a little weazen-looking old man, "that was ever locked up in that jail building for theft."

"The first, you say?" inquired the Inimitable.

"Yes, sir," responded the old man, "that's what I said, and I assure you that I meant nothing when I said it,—that is, no reflection against yourself," and while he was talking he edged his way near the door, as if he was fearful that Willets would do him bodily harm for making the observation.

"Gentlemen," said Willets, rising to his feet, "you hear what this man says, that I am the first to occupy the Hampton jail on the charge of felony. Now, gentlemen, this being true, I can lay claim to the title of 'pioneer.' Yes, gentleman, in my way, I am a pioneer, and have passed through the ordeal that would have caused the glory of an Indian scalper to pale, and pale, into insignificance. Do I enjoy the life of a pioneer? Well, no, it cannot be said that I yearn for it. The grasping of intelligence from the magnetic wires is a far more enjoyable pursuit."

"Mr. Willets," said the little old man, as he adjusted his glasses, "I have never had the honor of an introduction to you, but still I know you—that is, heard of you since I came to Hampton, which was only a few days since, but everybody seems to have time to give you a kick, although they didn't have time to give me an order for a few fruit trees, though I tell them that no better stock was ever offered in this city or any other place. Everybody seemed to know Edward Willets."

"Oh," said Willets, "I have some celebrity—in fact, I think it is quite common with pioneers generally."

"No doubt, no doubt," replied the little old man,

"but what I wanted to say to you was this: when I heard them talking, and talking about you stealing a lot of money, I said to them, 'hold on, don't judge too quickly, "lest ye yourselves be judged;" possibly Mr. Willets is innocent.' Sure enough, you were innocent, and it proves that the Bible is true, where it says, 'An old man for his wisdom.'"

"My dear sir," said the Inimitable, "what is your name?"

"Uncle Jimmie," said the old man, "Uncle Jimmie Drake."

"Sir," said Willets, "you are an old man, and have seen many sights with those eyes that are now growing dim; many times have you seen the winters come with their chilling blasts and drifting snow; many times have you seen the spring time come on, and witnessed the old earth wake up from its frozen stupor and bud into living life; but never before, Mr. Drake, have you seen a more striking example where the just and innocent have been so wrongly accused, as in my case. The poetry, Mr. Drake, of my usually glowing soul has sustained a shock from which I fear it will never recover."

"There is my hand, Mr. Willets," said the little old man, "and with it my best wishes."

"Thank you, sir," said the Inimitable Willets. "Your words sink deep into my heart, an organ within me that has been badly crushed in this unpleasant and unjust accusation; but I am happy to say, sir, that it is fast recovering, and I have great hopes that soon it will again be thumping its normal throb."

When Willets finished speaking, the little old man bade him good-night and started for the hotel, where Willets promised to meet him the next morning soon after seven o'clock, and breakfast with him.

The others who had called on Willets soon took their leave, and the Inimitable and Lin Brinkerhoff were left alone, and were soon busy at work practicing on the keys of the instrument. Every hour's practice placed Lin so much nearer the time when he could say, "I have mastered the art of telegraphy."

Their practicing was interrupted by a small boy who

came rushing in and said, "Here is a letter for Mr. Willets."

As soon as the letter was placed in Mr. Willets' hands, the small boy took himself away as fast as he came.

The Inimitable seated himself on the top of the back of a chair, and with his feet planted in the chair seat, looked like a big interrogation point. He hastily broke the seal, and perused the contents of the missive two or three times before changing his position. Then he climbed down from his perch, and said to Lin, "My charming boy, I am in receipt of another prescription from Miss Zurilda Goodsil."

"Do you owe her another bill?" Lin inquired.

"No, my boy, not that I know of. If I am in her debt I am ignorant of the fact, and, moreover, there is nothing in this prescription," said Willets, tapping the letter, "that indicates that I am her debtor. Listen, aspiring youth, until I read you the missive.

"At Home.

"Edward Willets, Esq.:

"My Dear Sir:—I understand that you have been given your liberty and reinstated in your former position.

"Permit me to congratulate you. I felt from the first, Mr. Willets, I did indeed, that you were innocent of the great charge brought against you. I knew that you could not possibly be guilty of such a crime, possessed as you are of a poetic soul that lifts you far above the groveling and mercenary affairs of life. I beg of you to come back to your former lodging place, where you will be received with the greatest consideration and kindness.

"I have just learned that my nephew, Pen Pembrooke, is not at farmer McGuffin's,—that the unpoetic child ran away from that kind gentleman's home only about a month after he went there. I need your consolation, Mr. Willets, I do indeed, and something tells me that your poetic inclinations are too strong to refuse my

request to come and make your home at my house. I am,

"Sincerely yours,
"ZURILDA GOODSIL."

"What do you think of that, my boy?" continued Willets.

"I can only think of one part of it," said Lin, "and that is about Pen's having run away. I do wonder where he could have gone?"

"That is a question," said the Inimitable, "I have no doubt that his aunt has propounded many times. I might say that I know where he is. You understand me, my youthful friend, I might say that I know, but I don't say anything, only that if I did know, I would see every Hamptonian in Hampton sunk a few hundred thousand fathoms deep before I would reveal his whereabouts. Of course Lin, my charming youth, yourself and your family, Pen's little sister, and possibly a few other never-to-be-forgotten-friends, are excepted when I speak of the Hamptonians. Now," Willets went on, "I will pen my reply to Miss Zurilda Goodsil's communication." And seating himself at the table, he worked patiently away, writing his reply which occupied a full half hour; but at last it was completed, and turning to Lin he said: "My highly appreciated and aspiring youth, lend me your ears, in the language of what's-his-name, until I read my reply:

"AT THE HAMPTON DEPOT.

"MISS ZURILDA GOODSIL:

"Your communication has been received and read, and I must say that it is very different in its general tone from your conversation the last time I saw you, which was within the walls of Hampton's Bastile. No, I will not come back to your home to find a shelter. Never again will I step my foot within your dwelling.

"'We have met and we have parted,'" tells the story. You may have a desire to know where I have taken up my abode. If so, please step round to the north-east cor-

ner of your dwelling to-morrow morning at just fifteen minutes past seven o'clock, and turn your face toward the City hotel, and after elevating your chin to an angle of about forty-five degrees, snuff the air, and, unless the wind is decidedly contrary, you will be able to smell the delicious odor arising from a broiling beefsteak that is being prepared for the undersigned, the moist-eyed, pink-complexioned, sandy-haired man of long and lank figure, and usually possessed of a poetic and easy temper, who subscribes himself,

"Respectfully yours,

"EDWARD WILLETS, ESQ."

"That is my reply," said the Inimitable, "and if she isn't tamed down a few when she gets it, then I don't know."

"She talks in her letter," said Lin, "as if she believed you were innocent, but if you could have heard how much she had to say while you were locked up you would be surprised."

"Young man," said Willets, "I know all that she said, and knew before I was released from my temporary confinement. The words temporary confinement," continued he, "are far more euphonious and in better taste than 'locked up,' and let me beg of you to never, never again say 'locked up,' when speaking of my late misfortune, which proved only to be a harmless stroke at my untarnished character. Remember, my boy, that 'truth crushed to earth will rise again,' like the cork on a fishing line. It may be overleaded, and the cork will be submerged, but as soon as the weight be removed, the cork will bobble to the top, and no adversity can keep it down, but it will rise to occupy the position it was intended to fill from the beginning of the world. So, also, is human life. The moment the weights that do beset us are cast aside, we spontaneously rise to that graduated scale on the ladder of life which we were born into this world to occupy."

Thus the Inimitable chatted away as the night wore on, wholly unconscious that every word he said was listened to by other ears than Lin Brinkerhoff's.

Thus week succeeded week and month succeeded month, and time was growing riper and riper, and the day hastened on when evil should be punished and that which was good rewarded.

CHAPTER XIV.

OLD ACQUAINTANCES AND NEW FRIENDS.

WE will now leave Edward Willets working away as an operator, to be looked after by Burt, the detective, and go in search of our little friend, Pen Pembrooke, whom we left traveling on through Cinapolis with Richard Tobias, *alias* Dick Dare. The darkness of night was fast closing in, but the lowering night only caused the heavens to grow more red as the black smoke of day was changed to rolling clouds of flame. On, on, it went, puffing and pouring out of the many tall chimneys that crowded each other and seemed to contend as to their height and which could vomit forth the greatest amount of red-hot smoke. Here all the manufactories and machine shops of Cinapolis were located. They were owned by rich corporations, and gave employment to hundreds of men. Although night was closing, yet the ceaseless clank of working machinery went on. As Pen and Richard came along, they paused to watch the two throngs of people hurrying by in different directions.

One throng was composed of the day laborers who, having finished their work, with weary looks were now returning to their homes, and the other was the night force coming on duty. Our two friends were almost dazed as they looked on this surging crowd, and felt a sense of loneliness stealing over them, much like the shipwrecked sailor feels who looks at the surging of high capped waves about him, yet thirsts and dies for a cooling draught of water.

"Richard," said little Pen, "where will we get our supper?"

"Ah, Pen, we have a few dimes," responded his companion, "with which to pay for our supper and lodging. Let us turn down this by-street and get away from the bewildering crowd, and from the terribly deafening sound of moving machinery."

They walked along, hand in hand, and were glad in their hearts that they were carrying out their good and noble resolves.

At last they came into the suburbs where lived the workingmen of this busy place. Some of the dwellings were rather neat and nicely painted, but most of them were poorly built and bore no semblance of paint, save the weather coat of time.

"Listen, Richard, someone is singing," said Pen.

They halted and listened to the sweet strains of music that floated out on the chilly night wind. It came from rather a neat-looking dwelling just over the way, and the full-voiced singer sang with a richness and pathos, seldom heard, these words:

"I am growing weary, old, burden fearing, lest
The road is too flinty and the way too long;
For the frail staff on which I rest,
Bends like a reed when bitter winds are strong."

"Come," said Richard, "let us go over and try for supper and lodging."

Accordingly, a little later they were rapping at the door, and were soon admitted into the little parlor, which in size reminded Pen of the little tucked-up front room in his old home at Hampton.

The young lady who had been singing was still seated in front of an upright piano, playing snatches of old songs that always carry the hearers back and back to some indefinable past, where all the senses rested in happy anticipation.

Little Pen was expecting all sorts of pleasant sights and happiness as soon as old Hinchey's quarters were abandoned, and a feeling of naturalness stole about him, while with Richard it was more a bewildered feeling than aught else.

The young lady finally ceased her playing and turned

partially round on the piano-stool just as the lady who had admitted our two friends brought in a lamp, which she placed on the center stand, and as she did so, said :

"Emily, this man and child have asked for supper and lodging. Will you assist me to lay the cloth, and set them a supper ?"

"Certainly, sister, certainly," she replied.

"I hope," interposed Richard, "that you will not trouble yourselves more than to set us a cold lunch, unless it is a cup of hot tea for my little friend here, who has been ill and is not very rugged yet."

"Oh, no, oh, no," said Pen hastily, "I am feeling quite strong and well now, and I will drink a cup of water with my lunch."

For a moment the lady's eyes seemed chained to the boy, and then she good-naturedly replied that "she would be the judge of what she set before strangers," and resting her hand gently on Pen's head, she smoothed back his hair, and continued, "I will see that your friend has a cup of warm tea, my boy, as well as yourself, and I know full well from your flushed face that you are feverish even now, and far from being strong, but when you have eaten what I prepare for you and have a good night's sleep I hope you will feel much stronger." With this she and the young lady left the room. As they came into the kitchen the young lady, whom we have addressed as Emily, said :

"Sister, did you ever see a sweeter, yet sadder, face than that boy wears ? He is a handsome child, and would be more so if the glow of health sparkled in those large eyes of his, and if his cheeks were free from that feverish flush ; but I think we can help that by morning. I hope so at least."

"Are you making the tea, Emily ?"

"Yes, sister," the young lady answered. "You know I am noted as a tea-maker," and here she laughed out a clear and rippling laugh, that had about it that same innate music which characterized her singing.

"Very well, Emily," her companion answered, "I will broil some steak and brown some toast, and soon

we will have a nice plain supper, yet one that is good enough for a king to sit down to, prepared for the little boy and his companion."

"A supper good enough for the gods, as brother Edward would say," laughingly replied Emily.

"Yes, indeed," her sister answered. "How I wish brother Edward were here to-night."

"I wish I knew the stranger's name," said Emily.

"Why so?" asked her sister.

"Well, I will tell you, Lydia," replied Emily. "You remember 'Rilla, my schoolmate, the young lady brother Edward was so taken with, and who I do hope will some day become our sister?"

"Certainly, I remember; we have her photograph in the album," replied the sister.

"Well," Emily went on, "there is something in this man's face that reminds me of 'Rilla. I can't say that he exactly resembles her, or she him, yet there is an expression about his face that reminds me of hers."

"You are a great girl, Emily, to always see something in every one that reminds you of some one else," her sister humorously replied.

"I know, sister," laughingly answered Emily, "that you will think I am growing quite 'fanaticized' on similarity of faces when I tell you in addition to what I have already said, that this little boy strongly resembles 'Rilla's companion, Kittie Pembrooke. Now, don't laugh at me, but the more I think of it the more I can see Kittie Pembrooke's looks about him. I thought when he first came in there was a strong resemblance in his face to some one I had seen, but could not at first remember whom it was."

"I wish, Emily," said her sister, "that you would have those two school friends, Kittie Pembrooke and 'Rilla Tobias, come and visit with us, and then I could share the pleasure of their acquaintance. For one to hear you talk from day to day, they would think there was no one else but Kittie and 'Rilla that attended school with you. I know your other schoolmates would feel a pang of jealousy if they knew how much greater

your attachment for these two young ladies was than for the rest of them."

"Now, sister," replied Emily, "you know I am greatly attached to all my schoolmates, but brother Edward made 'Rilla his favorite, and that is a good reason why I should, and as Kittie is 'Rilla's companion that is a good reason why I should also become greatly attached to her."

"If the tea has steeped, Emily," said her sister, "you may fill the cups, and I will invite them out to supper."

"All right, sister," replied Emily, and she proceeded to pour the tea. As she did so Richard and Pen came out and took seats at the table.

"Mr. Dorris, my husband," said Lydia, "works at night in one of the foundies, but he will return by breakfast time."

"I wonder," said Richard, "if there is any demand for laborers in the foundry where your husband works?"

"I think not," replied Mrs. Dorris, "for only last week quite a number of employes were discharged because business was dull."

"Don't you remember, sister," said Emily, "that William remarked only yesterday that Mr. James, the foreman, was in need of a clerk to do his correspondence?"

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Dorris; "I believe my husband did speak of that." Then turning to Richard she inquired: "Did you want to get a place?"

"Yes'm; I was desirous of obtaining work of some kind, and I wish my little friend here to attend school."

"Oh, Richard," said little Pen, "you must let me help you work, you must, indeed."

"Don't you like to attend school, my little man?" asked Emily.

"Oh, yes, indeed," replied the boy, "but I must not think of going to school and leaving Richard to work alone."

Richard looked proudly at his little companion, and Mrs. Dorris observed that the boy seemed greatly attached to him.

"Yes, madam," replied Richard, "we have been com-

panions a long time, and have become greatly attached to one another."

"But Pen, my boy," he continued, "you must be content to do as I wish. If I can obtain work here, we will go no further, and you must commence your school studies when I commence work. Every night we will be together."

"William will know, or can soon find out, if the place is still vacant," said Mrs. Dorris, "and your little friend can attend my sister's school."

"Yes, indeed," said Emily, enthusiastically; "and I know you would like my school, and I am sure I would like you for a pupil."

"Thank you," said Pen, modestly. Then turning to Richard he said, with a grateful look, "You are too good and kind to me, you are, indeed."

"Don't talk of my kindness to you," said Richard, as they arose from the table, "for I can never repay you for what you have already done for me."

Shortly after this Mrs. Dorris came to light them to bed. As she took up the lamp she said, "We are more fortunate than some of our neighbors, for we have an upstairs to our dwelling, though I warrant you are used to a better room than I have to give you."

As she said this, Pen thought of the shackly, barren garret they had just left, and Richard replied that "they were not accustomed to more than the absolute necessaries of life, and they had no desire for more."

The chamber which Mrs. Dorris showed them was comfortable but very plain, and contained two beds.

The lady bade them good night and returned to the rooms below, when our two friends seated themselves. As they did so Pen drew forth his little Bible, and read a chapter; then they both kneeled down, and the little waif offered up a childish prayer to Him who "doeth all things well." When they arose they sat for awhile in silence, and listened to the winter winds as they moaned and roared through barren tree-tops in the distance.

At last Richard spoke. "Pen, did you ever read 'The Psalm of Life,' by Longfellow?"

"I do not remember, Richard," replied Pen; "I think I had Longfellow's poems before father and mother died, but it seems so long ago that I have forgotten almost everything."

"Don't say that, my boy," replied Richard; "you shall and must go to school, and don't forget our pledge to one another to try and forget that part of our past that is so densely clouded with unhappiness, but let us live in the present and future, and be true to ourselves and every one whom we meet, and then we will be true heroes and be following Longfellow's words, where he says:

"In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of life,
Be not like dumb driven cattle,
Be a hero in the strife."

"Oh, Richard, those are grand words, and we will, oh, yes, I know we will, prove ourselves heroes in the battle of life. We are commencing rightly by placing our faith in the hand's of that Good Shepherd who will guide us aright."

"Yes," responded Richard, "but 'faith without works is dead,' we are told in the chapter you just now read, and hence we must not permit ourselves to have only faith, but we must work out our salvation by earnest, determined efforts."

Thus they conversed, on the first night of their pilgrimage from a life of evil toward a life of honor and honesty.

They had bade each other good-night, and were falling away into a quiet and peaceful slumber, when they were awakened by a loud knocking at the door below, and a moment later heard joyful words of greeting.

"Why did you not let us know that you were coming? Oh, Edward, I am so glad to see you."

"Have you heard from 'Rilla lately?" were a few of the many feminine-voiced interrogatories that were gleefully hurled at the new-comer,

Then came a man's voice in reply, and it said, "My darling sisters, permit me to thank you from the depth of my heart for this appreciative welcome. The warmth

and pressure of your sisterly hands, the exuberance of your sweet kisses, and the gentle shower of tears that fall for joy at my coming, remind me so vividly of those old happy days at home, that my feelings almost overcome me."

"How could we help being glad and overjoyed at your coming, dear brother?" said Emily, as she smiled through her tears.

"Edward would have been surprised and grieved, if we had not shed tears at his coming," said Lydia. "I know he would," and as she said this she wiped the tears away with her apron.

"Now, Lydia, my noble-hearted sister," said her brother, "I was not chastising you for those falling tears. Ah, no; far from it. Every tear that has tremblingly fallen from your dark eyelashes has been more precious to me than gems and rubies, while as to you, Emily, your unequaled and charming beauty is but a reflex, as it were, of the pent-up happiness that I feel at this meeting. Excuse me, sisters, but I will have to use my handkerchief to wipe my own eyes.

'Doubt when honeyed words are near,
But never doubt the truth sincere
That glistens through the falling tear,'

or something like that would indeed be most appropriate at the present time."

"Oh, brother." said Lydia, "you are the same gushing boy that you always were."

"And then his poetry," laughed Emily. "I do wonder where he picked that up," and here they all enjoyed a hearty laugh. Then they subsided into silence for a moment, and presently Lydia, excusing herself, went to the cellar and brought up an odd-shaped bottle. When glasses were provided, Edward, as if by custom, took up the corkscrew and pulled the cork, and as he filled the glasses round, he asked: "How many bottles still remain?"

"Only three are left, brother."

"Then this," said Edward, "is our third re-union

since our parents died. When they died, our only legacy was an even half-dozen bottles of this rare old wine, which we by mutual consent dedicated to re-unions. This is our third meeting since then, and three bottles have been tapped and three still remain." Then looking up at Lydia, he inquired, "What is your toast at this re-union?"

"The same," she answered, "that it has always been, that we may have many more reunions in the years to come."

"And now, Emily," said her brother, "pray what is yours?"

"My wish," said she, "is that you will make 'Rilla Tobias my sister, and that she will help us drink the next bottle of wine."

"Amen!" said Edward, as he rose to his feet. "And now, sisters," said he, "let us drink to the tears of friendship and the tears of affection that always flow at our reunions, and may such tears crystallize as they fall, and be worn as bright gems and rubies on the hearts of those we love."

While the brother and sisters were thus celebrating their reunion, Richard and little Pen lay in their couch, unable to sleep for hearing the pleasant discourse below.

When Emily made her wish that Edward would make 'Rilla Tobias her sister, Richard could wait no longer, and hastily rising, he threw on his clothes, and bade Pen do likewise. As soon as they were dressed they walked down the narrow stairway and knocked at the door, which was immediately opened by Mrs. Dorris.

As soon as Pen saw the brother, he gave Richard as great a surprise as he did the two ladies by rushing into that gentleman's arms and crying for joy, and as he did so shouted, "Oh! Mr. Willets, Mr. Willets, how glad I am that I have found you."

To say that Mr. Willets was overcome with surprise at seeing little Pen Pembrooke would feebly express it, and for once in his life his usually glib tongue clove to the roof of his mouth for a moment, and he could only stare in speechless amazement.

"Which one of you ladies," inquired Richard, "was speaking a few moments ago of 'Rilla Tobias?"

"I was," said Emily. "Do you know her?"

"I certainly do," said Richard. "She is my sister."

"What!" said Emily and the Inimitable, in one breath, "your sister?"

"And the boy," interposed Mrs. Dorris, "who is he?"

"Kittie Pembrooke's half brother," replied Richard.

Emily, not knowing what else to do, caught Pen in her arms and embraced him affectionately, which Mrs. Dorris in turn did also, more through a spirit of motherly sympathy than aught else. She had no children now. A little boy had been born to them, but while he was yet a prattling, chubby babe he had been taken from them, and his little body, cold and inanimate laid away to slumber on and on until the great waking day should come.

While the sisters were thus greeting Pen, Willets was warmly shaking Richard's hand, and then presented him to his sisters, who also received him with great cordiality. After this, Willets poured out a glass of wine, and, taking it up, said, "Mr. Richard Tobias, brother of the lady whom I hope to one day make my wife, permit me sir, permit me"—and at this handed the sparkling wine to Richard, who took it from his hand, and replied in a husky voice: "Mr. Willets and ladies, this is an unexpected meeting. Although you are strangers, yet have circumstances made us acquaintances, and your kind words and greeting warrant me in saying that we are already friends. But for the demon strong drink I would have been a different man—one that my sister would have been proud of, as I am of her. But this," said he, tapping the glass, "has ever been my weakness, and has robbed me of my sister's company; robbed me of good society; robbed me of peace; robbed me of happiness; robbed me of the respect of my fellow men; robbed me of money; robbed me of ten years of my life, and almost robbed me of all the respect I once had for myself, and but for this noble boy, I know not what would have become of me. Think it not strange, then,

Mr. Willets, if I ask you to excuse me from drinking to your health. My first drink was taken in honor of a new acquaintance, and now my first refusal is made to you, a gentleman with whom I trust I shall long have the honor of his friendship." With this he set the glass of wine down on the table, and Willets, in reply, said:

"Sir, you do not look like a gentleman addicted to strong drink, but you know yourself better than any one else can know you. Permit me, sir, to compliment you on this your first heroic refusal. In the very act of refusing, you have proven yourself a strong man. I can only add, in conclusion, in the language of that great, time-tried and illustrious What's-his-name, 'Be thou faithful unto the end!' I might add a postcript to my remarks, and say that I know too well what it is to have the fire of hope die out of our bosoms, to have faith faint by the wayside, and the gulf of bottomless and black despair reign supreme within our crushed and withering souls."

They then seated themselves, and Richard declared he could not sleep until he heard from them of 'Rilla. For an hour they conversed together of Richard's sister and Kittie Pembrooke. Richard promised to tell them his story the next day.

The good nights were then said, and soon after they were dozing away into a restful sleep, each feeling that the events of the evening had been indeed most satisfactory.

Especially did Pen feel jubilant to think he had heard of Kittie, and then the strength of will that Richard had displayed in refusing to drink wine caused the little fellow to hope with a new hope that all would yet be well with Richard.

The moaning winds had exhausted their strength, and rested in a cold, sullen silence. The old moon climbed slowly up the eastern sky among the sparkling stars, and peeped through the frosty window panes, letting its slanting rays fall on sleeping little Pen. His matted hair clustered about his forehead in wavy ringlets, while his face was sunny and smiling, as if no wave of grief or trouble had ever rippled over it.

CHAPTER XV.

AT DR. PULLINTWIST'S DENTAL ROOMS.

EARLY the next morning the breakfast bell sounded at Mr. William Dorris's, and when Richard and Pen came down stairs they found Edward Willets and Mr. Dorris conversing pleasantly together, the former of whom presented first Richard, and then Pen, to his brother-in-law, in his usual flowery manner.

The Inimitable found an opportunity to say a word to Pen in private, and tapping the boy on the shoulder with that same big-jointed, long index finger of his, said, "Pen, my charming boy, I am deucedly glad to see you, I am, by George."

"Thank you, Mr. Willets," said Pen.

"Don't mention it, my youthful companion, don't mention it. By the by, Pen, you are in elegant company." Cinderilla's own brother, as he made this last remark, bent forward and almost whispered it in Pen's ear, and then drawing back inserted both thumbs in the arm holes of his vest, and shutting one eye, as was his custom, said, "Stock went up last night, my charming boy, like a thermometer does in a hot house. Wouldn't sell out my stock in Cinderilla Tobias for less than a dollar ninety, spot cash. Let me see; originally I had thirty dollars invested at one-ninety, worth fifty-seven dollars."

Just here they were called to breakfast, and further observations on the part of Edward Willets relative to his stocks were for the time being suspended.

When breakfast was over, Richard and Pen drew aside, and after talking confidentially for a while, they concluded to only let Edward Willets into the secret of Richard's unhappy past, and to ask his counsel and advice.

It was, no doubt, a great effort on the part of that gentleman to remain quiet while the narration was being told; and when old Hinchey was described, Willets could not refrain from interrupting long enough to say,

"An exact description, sir, an exact description of the heartless, soulless wretch who killed Mr. Bethel on a car platform. But go on, go on, sir, don't let me interrupt."

When Richard finished speaking, Pen said, "Mr. Willets, I saw you once since our ride that morning in the stage coach."

"Ah, how was that, sir? I don't quite understand," said Willets.

Then Pen narrated the events of the evening when he was first captured by old Hinchey, and how they went by the depot and stopped to listen to Mr. Willets poetic renditions and Fourth of July speech.

'You remember, Richard, don't you?"

"Indeed, I do remember that night," said Richard, "for then it was, at the little Hampton church-yard, among the silent graves, that I awakened to the fact that I still had feelings of sympathy left within me, and the first tears fell from my eyes that had moistened them for many a long year. Yes, then it was that I awakened to a new life, and put my trust in Him who spilled His blood for fallen humanity, and you, my boy, were the Evangelist that roused up my latent feelings of veneration. Oh, sir!" said he, turning to Willets, "if you could have heard the prayer which Pen offered up to his God that night, as he bowed over his mother's grave, you would not think it strange that I promised to forsake the evil paths of sin and lead a new life.

'I knelt by graves of mouldering dust,
And thought of time, of moth and rust.'"

Richard's feelings were so wrought up that he could not say another word, but bowed his face on his hands and wept in silence.

"I am glad, oh, so glad," said little Pen, while his eyes glistened with tears, "to see Richard so sincere and earnest. I know, dear Richard, that we will succeed, and that the future holds in store for us many happy days."

Willets was greatly moved, and hastily brushing away the gathering mist from his own eyes, said:

"Richard, my friend, my companion, rouse yourself and fulfill the destiny for which you were created. If, for a moment, my weeping friend, you suppose that I, Edward Willets, Esq., am a stranger to hope, deserted feelings, disabuse your mind of such thoughts *instanter* Excuse my Latin, or French, or whatever it is, and know that I, too, have an intimate acquaintance with grief and despair. I, sir, have gazed through the lens of heart-crushing trouble.

"I paid an exorbitant price for the spectacles, and they were labeled 'experience.' My point of observation, as it were, was on the rocky, barren banks of muddy, murky and turbulent waters on which I launched my bark. In my frail vessel, snugly packed away, was my earthly hope, my happiness, my ambition, my all. Imagine, then, my feelings on suddenly discovering just in advance a whirlpool of such gigantic proportions that it is wholly beyond human conception to grasp. I said, imagine my feelings, but no, you could not do that; it is impossible."

Here the Inimitable applied his handkerchief to his face and wiped off great beads of sweat, and then continued in a husky voice; "Yes, my friends, there are bitter waters in every path. No matter whether the draught is taken from a golden goblet or from a gourd in the rough. In conclusion, let me ask you, what are all the rushing, howling, high-capped waves of life in comparison with the calm, pacific, shoreless ocean of eternity?"

"Ah!" said Richard, "you propound a question that each must answer for himself. For my part, I feel that the calm of Eternity can only be reached by determinedly riding aright the waves of life. Our barks must be skillfully manned or they will be capsized, and sink before the peaceful harbor of the much-hoped-for Eternity is reached."

Then Richard told Willets of his plans. How he would like to obtain work, and have Pen commence school at once, and thus they would live until such time as they could find out about Pen's people and Richard's sister.

Willets promised to help them carry out their plans, and then told them of his own trouble, about his arrest and final release, and that he did not believe the old gentleman Mr. Baine ever lost the money.

"Baine?" said Pen, quickly, "I wonder if he is Lillie Baine's father?"

"I knew a Mr. Stephen Baine when I was a boy," said Richard, "He resided near your Grandfather's, Pen."

"That, sir," said Willets, "is the gentleman's name —Stephen Baine."

"Lillie's mother told me," said Pen, "when this Bible was given me, that she knew my father when he was a young man."

"Don't you remember, Pen," said Richard, "when I told you your father's early history I spoke of two twin sisters, Clara and Bertha? One your father married, and the other married Stephen Baine?"

"Oh, yes, I do remember now," said Pen, "and I wonder why I have not associated it before with the name of the lady and little girl I rode with in the stage coach."

"Do you know where Mr. Baine lives?" inquired Richard of Mr. Willets.

"I do not," replied Willets, "but I can find out."

Richard asked particularly about the time the money was said to have been stolen, and then sat silently trying to study out some chain of thought, but could not, at the time, remember dates and facts of happenings that had taken place the Novemher before.

At last he said, "I do not know, Mr. Willets, but what I can throw some light on the robbery; I do not promise that I can, but it is possible. I will brush my memory up and perhaps will be able to think of something that will throw light on the affair."

"It is very like old Hinchey's work, isn't it?" asked Pen.

"I have grievances to right," replied Richard. "A human cancer to pluck out from among men. It is a duty, and I will not shrink from it." Then turning to

Mr. Willets, he asked, "How long will you remain in Cinapolis?"

"I have a ten days' leave of absence from my duties at Hampton, and will remain here with my sisters a good full week."

The forenoon passed quickly away. Willets answered all of Pen's questions about his little sister and his aunt Zurilda, also about his schoolmates, especially Lin Brinkerhoff. Willets was very enthusiastic about Lin's success in learning telegraphy, and said that "the aspiring youth" would soon be able to take charge of an office.

It was agreed that neither Mr. Dorris, his wife, or Emily were to know anything about Richard's unhappy past, and Willets said he would get Emily's promise not to write a word about Richard or Pen to 'Rilla.

"We have a duty," said he, "to perform; knotty knots to unravel; grievances to punish; the guilty to chastise and the injured to reward, and I, sir, Edward Willets, Esq., belong to the last named class."

The dinner hour past off very pleasantly, and Mr. Dorris, who had been sleeping all forenoon, said he would go down to the foundry and introduce Richard to Mr. James, the foreman. Soon after they had started on their errand, Mr. Willets' usually smiling face was suddenly wrinkled in pain. A decaying tooth had wakened up from its stupor, and was angrily inquiring why its very nerve of life should be thus exposed.

"You had better go to the dentist," said Mrs. Dorris, "and have it pulled."

"Hand me my hat, Pen, my charming boy, and come with me. The unruly molar shall be extracted though the shock I receive in parting company with it still the beating of my heart."

"Oh, Edward!" said his sister, "don't make so much ado about it. I had nine pulled at one time. I would laugh," she continued, "if you should have the same experience that I had."

"What sort of an experience had you?" inquired the Inimitable Edward, as he looked at her in a crushed and forlorn way.

"Why, my teeth always quit aching just as I got to the dentist's office," she answered.

"Well," said Willets, "I would laugh, too, if such good luck was my lot."

With this, he and Pen started away for the dental rooms of a suburban dentist. They walked along in silence until they were almost to the office, when Willets suddenly turned to Pen and said: "Would you, sir, have believed it? That cussed tooth has caved, and is this instant begging my everlasting pardon?"

"Doesn't it ache at all?" asked Pen.

"Not a particle," answered the Inimitable. "It is dumb as an oyster; actually feels good. Things usually do, I believe, when they quit hurting; but my mind is made up, and I shall sever my connections with Mr. Tooth."

"There is the place," said Pen, pointing to a building a little further on, where a huge sign swung creaking to and fro, with the words, "Dr. Pullintwist's Dental Rooms." In addition to this announcement, the sign was decorated with the hieroglyphic trade-mark of a large, pointed tooth and a pair of forceps.

"Yes," said Willets, "there is no doubt that this is the place and 'now is the accepted time.'"

They stepped into the room and found a fire burning brightly, but no dentist to receive them. The Inimitable threw off his hat and coat, and declared that he felt as if he was a second Isaac about to be offered as a living sacrifice.

Five minutes went by, and still no dentist came.

During this time Willets had examined every pair of forceps in the establishment, and even tried them on his teeth, and finally proposed that Pen get into the chair, and he would play dentist and examine his masticators.

Just then the door opened, and a middle-aged lady came in. As soon as she did so she commenced untying the wraps and shawls that were bundled around her head.

The Inimitable caught Pen's eye and winked, and then Pen knew that something was coming.

"Most dead, doctor, am, indeed, with the tarnallest aching tooth you ever saw."

"Ah!" said Willets, "a very great affliction, madam, I know how to sympathize with you, I do indeed. Have had the top part of my head lifted up an inch, more or less, at every throb of an aching tooth, but thanks to science, madam, there is a remedy, and I presume you are here to avail yourself of that remedy."

"Yes, sir," she answered, "I either want it filled or jerked out; ain't caring which."

"Knowing all the surroundings, madam," said Willets, "as I do, I certainly would advise that you have it extracted. Just take a seat here in my operating chair, and I will examine the fractious member of your masticating family. Ah! I see," said the Inimitable, as he gazed down into the patient's mouth.

"Now, which way would you prefer having it pulled?" inquired Willets.

"Out!" she answered snappishly.

"I mean," said the Inimitable, as he continued to examine the aching tooth, "which method, the French or Bengal. If you are at all acquainted with dental surgery, madam, you are aware that there are two systems of extracting teeth, the French and the Bengal systems."

The patient did not propose to display her ignorance by acknowledging her lack of knowledge of the subject, and so she bluntly asked, "What do you charge for pulling teeth?"

"One dollar per tooth French system; two dollars, Bengal system," said Willets. "You, perhaps, are aware, madam, that the Bengal system is, so to speak, painless; that is, painless compared to the French style of brutally mangling the jaw and——"

"You may pull by the Bengal plan," she interrupted.

"Very well," said Willets, as he seized a huge pair of pincers and thrust them into the patient's mouth, fastening them on the wrong tooth. Then, with one arm around the woman's head, he proceeded to pull with

all the strength he could command, and out came the forceps, tooth and all.

"Holy mother!" cried the woman in unfeigned agony, as she expectorated a mouthful of blood, and called for a glass of water, which Pen hastily handed her.

While she was rinsing her mouth, Willets was examining the tooth, and, to his amazement, found that he had relieved the woman of the wrong molar.

"Madam," said he, "let me again examine and see if my suspicions are true. I suspect that the real pain is occasioned by the adjoining tooth."

"Dr. Pullintwist," said the woman, "I told you to pull on the Bengal style. Why in the blowing winds didn't ye do it?" As she said this she settled back in the chair.

Willets replied, saying, "My good woman, I did as you told me—I pulled according to the latest improved Bengal style, and—ah!" said he, "just as I anticipated; the tooth back of the rotten shell I extracted has a cavity in it, I was going to say twelve feet square, but of course it is not quite so large as that."

"Well, for the love of the Holy Virgin, pull it out," said the woman.

"Just what I am going to do," said Willets, and as he picked up the forceps he observed, by way of explanation, "Madam, you thought the Bengal system was painful; now, to show you the vast difference, I will pull this by the French system, and if you don't yell like a whole French army, then my name isn't Pullintwist."

"No, no, doctor!" the woman screamed, "pull it by the Bengal style, if it does cost an extra dollar."

"Just as you say," replied Willets, and soon the decayed tooth was lying on the shelf along side of the sound one, and his patient was preparing to go.

"Do you make any difference in the price, doctor," asked the woman, "when you pull two teeth?"

"Always, always," replied the Inimitable, as he took a five dollar bill the woman reached him. "My prices, madam, are always the same to the rich and the poor, the high and the low. Two dollars for one tooth, five

dollars for two, or ten dollars for three. I would have been most happy to have relieved you of another tooth, had your wants demanded it."

"Five dollars!" shrieked the woman in amazement, "why I never thought of paying any such a price. I promised my little boy," she said with a sigh, "I would bring a fowl home for supper, as it is his birthday, but now I will have to disappoint the little fellow."

"Madam," said Willets, "my prices are unchanging and unchangeable, but permit me to present you with this. It is only a dollar, but I beg you will accept it and purchase a fowl for your supper, and may God bless your charming little boy."

"Thank you, sir, thank you," said the woman gratefully. "Now I must go."

"Wait a moment, madam. Has your darling boy a brother?"

"Yes, sir, two; one a man grown, and the other a baby boy."

"Madam," said Willets, "permit me—here is another dollar for your little baby boy; accept it, and make me happy, and may the angels guard your little one."

"Oh, sir," said the woman, "what will my sick husband say when I tell him of your kindness?"

"Sick husband, did you say? Is your husband an invalid, madam?"

"He has had a run of the fever, sir, for the past four weeks, but is much better now," she replied.

"Madam," said Willets, in a voice that was now husky, "permit me—here are five dollars; present them to your husband with my compliments."

"Oh, I cannot accept the present," she hastily replied, "I cannot indeed."

"I do not want you to accept it," said Willets, "but I want your husband to. Be kind enough, madam, to carry the trifling present to him, and give him my compliments. I am not Dr. Pullintwist, but Edward Willets, Esq., here is my card. May I ask your name, madam?

"Mrs. Lester, sir. My husband's name is Daniel Lester, and my grown son is a—a—de—— Well, I must

hurry home," she said flurriedly. "Good day, Mr. Willets."

"Good day, madam, good day."

"Well, Pen," said Willets, "I guess we'd better go. I do not care to play dentist any longer, though I have enjoyed the last hour immensely. What are you laughing at, my dear boy?"

"Oh!" said Pen, "it is all so funny to hear you talk and play dentist. I am very glad, Mr. Willets, that you did not keep the five dollars. I would not have enjoyed it at all if you had."

Willets put on his coat and remarked that his tooth was beginning to ache again. He had just buttoned up his coat when Doctor Pullintwist came in, and after greeting Willets, explained that he had been away in another part of the city doing some dental work.

Willets was soon seated in the operator's chair, and, in less time than it takes to tell it, he and his unruly tooth parted company. The price was paid, and soon our two friends were walking briskly down the street toward the Dorris home.

"Mr. Willets," said Pen, "may I ask you a question?"

"Certainly, my charming young companion. What is it?"

"Why," said Pen, while a smile flitted over his young countenance, "I wanted to ask what system the dentist pulled your tooth by, the French or Bengal?"

"Look here, Pen," said Willets, while a broad smile crept over his face, "'jokes are free in harvest,' but this isn't harvest time, and I do not want my sisters to know that I have taken up a new profession."

That night at the supper table Richard told Pen that he had secured work as corresponding clerk for the foreman of the foundry, and would commence his duties the following day, and that Pen was to begin his school days again, with Miss Emily Willets as instructor.

To say that Pen was overjoyed, would express his feelings but feebly. Emily Willets was a very handsome lady, a perfect blonde in everything save her

lustrous dark eyes. She possessed a beautiful figure, not too tall, and just stout enough to give her whole bearing a healthy. robust appearance.

Heretofore we have seen how she was admired for her winning, winsome ways at the Seminary, and those charms which then made her a favorite were gathering strength with the years. She was a beautiful young lady ; all agreed to this, while those who knew her best, loved her most. Her fair complexion needed no false make-up. Her eyes were always brim full of mirth and merriment, and her rose-tinted lips wore a smile of gladness and contentment. No look of haughtiness or condescension, so repulsive in all who wear it, was ever discoverable on her handsome countenance, or in her many gentle acts of kindness to those about her.

As they were seated around the blazing, cheerful fire, that evening, Emily could have told them she had a visitor that day, but she did not tell even her sister.

Yes, her school had been honored by a visitor. Not that visitors were uncommon, no, not that, but the visitor was such a handsome young gentleman, and so frank and easy in his manner, and withal had such a deep musical voice that even Emily, staid, sensible Emily, was surprised to find herself thinking of him so much. Then, he acted so queerly ; he did not even give his name, but promised that she should know him soon.

He even seemed familiar with her past history, yet all he said was expressed so cleverly that she could not feel otherwise than friendly toward him.

Ah, Emily, Emily, you, too, are beginning to learn the lesson of life. It is not enough to have bread to eat and clothes to wear ; it is not enough to have your heart rich in happy thoughts and a mind well stored with knotty facts gleaned from musty school-books. No, indeed ! ay, a thousand times, no ! It is sympathy and kindness, love, companionship and watchfulness that a woman wants. Duty, as told by the world, is an icy shadow, an empty nothingness, and can never fill the sanctuary of the heart. Woman was intended to be a cherished plant, nurtured by a skillful florist. Then, indeed, "A thing of beauty is a joy forever," and then

will the tender plant exhale its influence over the heart of a man and bless him in his labors. But how many men are unskillful florists! The plant is transplanted from the nursery where it budded into life, away into isolation. It is neglected soon, and uncared for. Then it droops and languishes, and when the noontide heat of conflict comes creeping slowly but surely on, it sinks down. The velvet flower loses its beautiful colors; its fragrance dries up, and its leaves, like the dry grasses, wither away and are no more. Such is the untimely end.

CHAPTER XVI.

BURT LESTER, THE DETECTIVE, IS TAKEN IN.

THE following day found Richard at the foundry, learning the routine of his duties.

He was a skillful penman when a younger man, and even now wrote a hand far better than the ordinary copyist.

Little Pen was now thirteen years old, but of rather diminutive stature. If, however, you studied his face, you would find a look of maturity stamped thereon. Not in any one feature, but in his almost sad and far-away look—such a look as we are all destined to feel, if not to wear, when our budding hopes are blasted beyond recovery by some rough wind. At such times, when our hopes are dashed ruthlessly to the earth, we are each disposed to claim the benefit of the doubt, and picture to ourselves the fragrant, bright-colored flowers they might have borne, had they lived and prospered well.

Emily soon found that Pen was already well advanced in his studies, much beyond his years.

It might be well for us to explain before Emily's handsome visitor calls again, who he is and where he came from and what is his errand. To do this it will be necessary to take you, dear reader, by the hand, and perform the feat of an instantaneous trip through space, and bring

up at "Dairyfield Farm," where our old friend, Stephen Baine, and his household reside.

'Rilla Tobias and Kittie Pembrooke are still at the farm, and little sweet-faced Lillie Baine is growing prettier every day. Her only brother, Harry Baine, is absent from home, and has been away since shortly after his father had the misfortune of losing the money at Hampton. His going away came about in this manner.

It seemed that Burt Lester, the detective, had for reasons of his own, concluded to visit Mr. Baine and have a personal interview with the loser of the wealth which he was searching for.

Accordingly, Lawyer Westover was informed of the wish, and another detective was secured to look after Willets' movements for a few days and Burt Lester started for Dairyfield Farm.

Arriving there, he presented his letter of introduction and was hospitably received. For two long hours during the afternoon of his arrival, he and Mr. Baine held private consultation in the library. At the supper table the detective met the entire family, and seemed considerably interested in Harry Baine, and, although he did not show it, yet he was desperately taken with Miss Kittie Pembrooke.

The supper hour passed off very pleasantly, and Burt Lester felt as though he would gladly abandon the life of a detective, and turn to farming and cheese making, if he could have such a home as Dairyfield Farm.

Immediately after supper Mr. Baine said, "Young ladies, I want you to favor us with some music presently. Mr. Lester and I will retire to the library for an after-supper smoke, and then join you in the parlors."

"We will do the best we can for you, uncle," Kittie responded cheerfully.

"You say," said the detective, after they had gained the privacy of the library, "that Miss Pembrooke told you this story about the murdered merchant, Mr. Bethel, and the part that Edward Willets acted?"

"Yes, sir," responded Mr. Baine.

"I am acquainted with the case," said Lester, "and I

will tell you now, frankly, that I am inclined to believe that Willets had nothing to do with the murder of Bethel, but he may have been an ally. His finding the purse was all a sham,—at least good detectives hold to that theory. They think he became alarmed, and after relieving the purse of about half its contents, gave the rest back, and in this way attempted to prove himself innocent of any knowledge of the affair; and he succeeded with a majority of the people."

"Do you mean to tell me, sir," asked Mr. Baine, "that you suspect he was a party to the robbery?"

"Exactly," answered Lester; "that is just what I believe."

"Well, don't it beat thunder and high water," said Mr. Baine, impatiently, "how these slick chaps can fool the women. Now, my niece, Kittie Pembrooke, believes firmly that this man Willets proved himself to be a model of honesty in the part he played in that affair, and she is a young lady of mighty good sense, Mr. Lester."

"I cannot help but agree with you on that point," replied Burt. "She impressed me as being a young lady of remarkably good judgment, as well as looks."

"Perhaps," said Mr. Baine, "you had better have a talk with my niece, and possibly she may be able to tell you a good many things about Willets' people, where they live, etc."

"Perhaps," evasively answered Burt, while a flushed look of pleasure overspread his handsome face.

Taking a note book from his pocket, he penciled some new thoughts, and then turning to Mr. Baine said: "I wish I had your son with me; I think he would be a great help."

"If you need him, Mr. Lester, he shall go with you," said Mr. Baine.

"I certainly think he would be of assistance to me," replied Burt, "in numberless ways."

"In the morning, then," said Mr. Baine, "we will have a talk with my son, and if he is agreeable, he may accompany you back to Hampton. But come, Mr. Les-

ter, I see you have finished your cigar; come, let us join the ladies."

Burt was only too willing to comply, for there was a fascination in Kittie Pembrooke's society that exercised a wonderful influence over him.

She was chatting away gleefully, when they entered the room, and had apparently just finished telling some very amusing story, for her companions all joined in a very hearty laugh of merriment.

Burt had always felt that angelic beauty and deep affections were myths that were only found in books of fiction, but now as his eyes benignly rested on Kittie Pembrooke, he said to himself, "she certainly is beautiful."

She wore a dark blue silk which exquisitely fitted her slender, graceful figure, and was relieved at the throat by a cream tinted lace collar fastened with a handsome cameo pin. Her glossy black hair was worn in accordance with the prevailing style. Her figure was faultlessly symmetrical, and her face radiant and beautiful. The features were clearly cut and regular; the eyes, of deep violet blue, were shaded by long dark lashes, and her cheeks and lips wore the coral bloom and tint of health.

'Rilla Tobias was also an entertaining young lady, but she was not possessed of that dazzling beauty which nature had so lavishly bestowed upon Kittie.

The evening passed pleasantly away, all too soon for Burt Lester.

It hardly seemed to have begun, when it was over. Burt, on reaching his room, first closed the door and fastened it, then looked in the commode mirror. He scrutinized himself for some time. Had his thoughts been reduced to words they would have run as follows: "Burt, old boy, I think you have struck a trail. I am afraid you are losing your nerve, and if you don't get out of this soon, all your detective metal will have been taken out of you. What? You say that again, you rascal, that you are in love with Kittie Pembrooke's pretty face, and I will punish you within an inch of your life;

I will, by heavens, I will. No more of this fooling, sir. Mind what I tell you, no more of it."

Presently he drew a cigar from his pocket, and seating himself in an easy chair, continued his reflections long into the night.

"What is life?" he at last asked himself, and then a tiny murmuring voice whispered in his ear, "Life is the valley between birth and death. Looking backward or forward all is unlimited space. Life has its Springtime of growing freshness; its Summer of maturity; its Autumnal decline, and then its cold Winter of death; after that follows the unknown limitless eternity."

"If this is true," he soliloquized, "is man in death more than the dead flower? Will his body, like the flower, crumble into dust, and in time be reanimated, remoulded, and lighted with a new soul, and claim another lease of life, and set out on another journey across the valley, only to follow the dim footsteps of preceding generations, and when time again grows ripe, vanish by an appointed process and again mingle dust with brother dust? If so, then from the creation of the mother earth down to the present time, nothing has been added to it and nothing taken away."

Again a voice answered him, but this time it appeared to come from above, and seemingly a great way off, away among the wintry stars that peeped in at his window, and it said, "All things are governed by law and order, according to the mandates of the Divine Lawgiver. Every leaf that falls, every shrub that grows, all fruits that ripen, all flowers that bloom, all waters of river and ocean, are alike governed by an unchanging law. The love of the God of the Universe is over all His works, like a protecting mantle. Though you should travel to the uttermost parts of the earth, lo! He is there. Take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, lo! He is there! The children of the Universe, whether care-free and happy, or sorrowing in anguish, are alike His children, and not orphans. The God of Heaven and Earth is a God of love universal, and stretches out His arms and encircles the rich and the poor, the white and the black. He is no respecter of persons.

"When the sorrow-laden grows weary and rests by the wayside, and finally is lulled into that stilled slumber, and the lips grow cold and voiceless, it is not true that there is no waking, nor is it true that when he does waken, it will be in a stormy, tempest-tossed chaos of everlasting midnight. No, it is not true that such is the end, but it is true that he goes home to his beloved dead, and joyfully rejoins the kindred spirits of those who have gone before. Yes, he spends a happy blissful eternity in the New Jerusalem. 'In my father's house are many mansions.' There death is no more. There the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest forever and forever."

After this the voice ceased speaking, and was heard no more, and Burt Lester soon after sought his bed, thinking, as he did so, that if this was his springtime of life why need he be so determined not to find some noble woman, who through the succeeding years of summer-time, fall, and winter, would be his companion.

The day following he had an interview with Kitty Pembrooke, and for a full hour they conversed very pleasantly together. The conversation consisted mostly, however, in interrogatives on Burt Lester's part, and answers by Kittie. Every question that Burt propounded, and every question that Kittie answered, snared self-reliant Burt Lester more hoplessly in the toils of captivity.

At last, for the want of something better to talk of, he said, "I believe that is all, Miss Pembrooke." Then, looking deep into her blue eyes, he added, "There is one other question I wish to ask, but not now. When the case developes I may ask it."

"I would be pleased," said Kittie, "to answer any question, Mr. Lester, that is in my power to answer, for I am sure Mr. Willets is as innocent of the crime as an angel."

"You mean, then," said Burt, while a smile lit up his countenance, "that he is as innocent of the crime as you are?"

"I hardly think," answered Kittie, laughing, "there is much of a compliment, Mr. Lester, in your interro-

gatory, for men of your profession are accustomed to see anything but angels in angels' disguise."

"In no such attire," said Burt, "as you are wearing, Miss Pembrooke."

"Ah! I see now," she said, mischievously, "you are trying to compliment my dress."

As she said this she arose, and added, in a less mirthful tone, "I do hope, Mr. Lester, you will be successful in finding out the person who took uncle's money, and then Mr. Willets will be wholly exonerated."

"I see, Miss Pembrooke," said Burt, arising, "that you are greatly interested in Mr. Willets." As he said this a pained look stole over his countenance.

"Yes, sir," Kittie answered frankly, "I am very much interested in his welfare."

"I thought as much," said Burt, gloomily. Then brightening up, he said, "I hope, Miss Pembrooke, that all will be righted, and that justice will be done. If any man has erred, let him pay the usurious fees of experience. Now, if I am not asking too much, may I hear you sing again before I go? I will start immediately after dinner."

"Why—yes, sir, I will sing now for you," she said, half reluctantly. "Come this way, Mr. Lester," and she led the way into the parlor. She seated herself at the piano, and her slender fingers glided through a prelude with velvety softness of touch. Then she sang, with a full-voiced sweetness:

"When daylight fades,
And sombre shades
Steal through the distant elms,
With the fading light
My soul takes flight
Beyond the mystic realms.

"I'll fly in my dreams
To marvelous streams,
Away over monutain and leas,
Where palaces stand
On the golden strand
By the margins of crystal seas.

"Where beautiful flowers,
In moonlit bowers,
Unfold to the wondrous strain,
Let my eyelids close
In resting repose;
Awake, and let me dream again."

Her magnificent voice held Burt Lester spell-bound as it swelled deep and full, then thrillingly low in its enchanting melody, and then ringing out clear and sweet as the chiming of bells.

As she sang, the words fell from her lips in such harmony with the rippling notes, that they seemed to be echoing from the very depths of her soul. It was a natural gift,—the strength and fullness, the soft melodious thrill, the sweetness of voice and purity,—a gift such as our Divine Creator confers on warbling birds of the forest, to win us from cankering heart-aches as we journey on toward the end.

Art could never produce such music, but culture had improved and perfected it. When she had finished, he woke from the spell and repeated:

"Awake, and let me dream again!"

He thanked her warmly, and said: "Miss Pembrooke, your uncle, Mr. Baine, told me that you were very anxious to learn the whereabouts of your little brother, Penfield Pembrooke. Can I not assist you in some way?"

"Oh, sir," said Kittie, as she clasped her hands together, "if you only could, you do not know how thankful I would be; and then Grandfather Pembrooke would bless you to his dying day for the noble service."

"I would not want a greater blessing," said Burt, "than to make you happy. Excuse me, Miss Pembrooke, but there are times in life, I find, when the tongues of men speak wildly."

Kittie looked confused, and hardly knew what reply to make, when fortunately Mr. Baine came in, and in his usual good humor said, "Well, Mr. Lester, how long does it usually take you to interview a witness?" and then mistaking Kittie's flushed face to be the result of

his own words he continued, "Hey, Kittie! blushing?"

"Oh, uncle," she said, "Mr. Lester has promised to try to find Pen."

"Well, that's kind of him, I am sure," replied Mr. Baine, and then looking very merry out of his twinkling eyes, he added: "It would be rather romantic, Kittie, if Mr. Lester should find the brother and then claim the sister for fees," and here the old gentleman laughed a long, hearty laugh.

"Uncle Stephen," said Kittie, poutingly, "you are so dreadful when you get to joking, you don't care a bit what you say."

"Ho! ho!" said the old gentleman, "I guess she is going to get angry at her old uncle."

"It is time enough for her to be angry," said Burt, beamingly, "when I have the audacity to demand the fee."

This brought out a smile all around, and the three sat down and talked matters over, relative to facts known about Pen, and how it would be best to proceed.

After dinner Harry Baine and Burt Lester were to start away. Mrs. Baine rather objected at first to his going, but she finally withdrew her objections when she was told that little Pen Pembrooke was to be hunted up, and that Harry was going to help find him.

Lillie kissed her brother good-by, and said: "Brother, I want you to see if Pen has taken good care of the Bible I gave him, and I want you to tell Uncle George Tobias to come to the farm again right away, for I want to see him."

While Harry was taking leave of the family, Burt found an opportunity to say aside to Kittie: "You'll not forget, Miss Pembrooke, that I have a question to ask you, sometime in the future?"

"I believe you said something about another interrogatory, but I really believe you only said so to gain time, for I am sure you asked me every question you could possibly think of."

At this she laughed a little provoking laugh that

knocked all the sentimentality of their parting out of the question.

Burt Lester tried hard to laugh, too, and appear jolly, but it was more than he could accomplish successfully. The farewells, however, were finally said, and our two friends pushed on to Hampton, stopping in Chicago to get some make-ups for Harry.

Burt and Harry soon became great friends. They seemed to be involuntarily drawn to one another, and each accepted the new relation without stopping to inquire as to the cause.

Thus the remaining part of the winter had passed, until Edward Willets, Esq., had applied for and obtained a leave of absence.

The same train that carried the Inimitable Willets to Cinapolis, also carried two other passengers among the many travelers whe alighted at this place. One was a a very old and infirm man, who walked with a staff, the other an English, mutton-chopped individual, who wore goggles, but the only service the goggles rendered was to save the stylish Englishman the annoying trouble of using his eye-glass, which swung from the lapel of his vest. It is needless to say that one of these travelers was Burt Lester and the other Harry Baine. We have seen how the latter called on Emily Willets, and also, have seen what an impression the gentleman in question had made.

The evening after his visit to the school he and Burt were snugly quartered with Burt's father, Mr. Daniel Lester. As to Burt's mother, we have formed her acquaintance at the dental rooms of Dr. Pullintwist.

Burt had never spoken to Harry during all the months of their companionship about his cousin, Kittie Pembrooke, but labored under the impression that Edward Willets was more than her friend, and he secretly determined to hunt the Inimitable down, unmask him, and then ask Kittie Pembrooke one more question.

Harry Baine had often heard 'Rilla and his Cousin Kittie praise Emily Willets' beauty, and he had a great desire to see her. What he thought of her can be best

told by the Scriptural citation, "The half has not been told me," which he muttered to himself as he walked away from the school-house.

Mr. Daniel Lester had been sick, but was now convalescent, and all the tonics and medicines in Cinapolis could not have done him the good that his son Burt's appearance did. Mrs. Lester showed Edward Willets' card as soon as she returned home, and told of her experience at Dr. Pullintwist's office, and that evening while they were all seated around the fire, she turned to her son and asked, half reluctantly (as if she had suspicions that the question she was going to ask, was not a ruse of Willets) :

"Do you know, Burt, how many systems dentists employ in pulling teeth?"

"I hardly understand your question, mother," replied Burt.

"Well," she responded, "is there such a thing as pulling teeth by the French or the Bengal Systems?"

Burt, unruly son that he was, actually laughed outright at his mother's question, and the convalescent husband joined in the merriment.

"Why, mother," said Burt at last, "Willets is no more of a dentist than you are, and those systems he told you of are myths, and generated in his own vivid conception. He is a queer study. Sometimes he is so gorgeously voluminous in eloquence that you would naturally think, to hear him, that he was a public crier of some kind, or an experienced patent medicine vender. Again, in a fit of despondency, he will mope about as if he was doomed to travel in the bottom-most pit of midnight chaos, and the flickering light of Hope had forever gone out. In money matters, so far as the detectives could find out, he was the same sort of a financier, through all his life that he has proved himself to be while playing dentist at Dr. Pullintwist's office.

That night, after Harry and Burt found the privacy of their own room, the former said, "I tell you, Burt, I do not believe Willets is the guilty man, and unless something happens while he is here in Cinapolis to

prove him guilty, I am a going to look for a trail in another quarter."

"Did you call on Willets' sister to day?" asked Burt.

"I certainly did," replied Harry, and his face flushed scarlet, then with a determined look he hastily added, "I called on her at the school room, and in doing so, I called on the handsomest lady in America."

Burt looked up and met Harry's steady gaze and saw he was in dead earnest.

He mockingly appeared to examine Harry's pulse, and then gave a low whistle, and said, "I guess it is a case."

"That's all right, Lester," replied Harry good humoredly, "I have seen cases before, though I never was a victim myself until to day."

Burt looked up quickly at his companion, and mentally soliloquized: "Surely, Harry does not suspect that I am as deep in the meshes myself, occasioned by Kittie Pembrooke, God bless her." Then with great deliberation, he replied, "Harry Baine, I do not know how much of this nonsensical foolishness you may have seen in your day, but I speak for myself, Burt Lester, when I say that I know nothing about it." There, thought Burt, that will make him say something, if he suspects anything.

Harry chuckled an ironical laugh, and said: "I hope, Burt, you are not so blind as to imagine that I am ignorant of the cupid-cyclone that struck you a fair, full blow when you visited Dairyfield Farm. Why, all our family knew that it was a case of the most malignant type."

Here Harry broke into a violent fit of laughter and held his sides in the mirthful exercise.

Burt Lester sat like a statue while Harry was speaking, and for some time after, but finally he concluded it was useless to hold out, and so he too fell into the chorus part of his companion's merriment.

"There is no use denying it," said Burt; "I was dreadfully smitten, and if Edward Willets is hunted down and proven guilty then I will have a chance."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Harry.

"I mean," replied Burt, "that Kittie Pembrooke told me she felt a great interest in Mr. Willets, and knew he was innocent, and all that kind of talk, which gave me to understand that—that—"

"That Edward Willets had her affections?" interrogatively interrupted Harry.

"Yes, sir," replied Burt with an effort, "that is what I wanted to say."

At this Harry Baine gave a prolonged whistle, and then almost convulsed himself with another fit of laughter, but finally he sobered down enough to say:

"Well, Burt Lester, the shrewd and never-to-be-taken-in-detective, a man who, because of his deep penetration into hidden mysteries, has earned a world-wide reputation; I am surprised at your stupidity!"

"What do you mean?" asked Burt, brusquely.

"I mean," answered Harry, "that Edward Willets is betrothed to 'Rilla Tobias, Kittie's friend, whom you met while at the farm, and this is the reason, and the only reason, why she takes such an interest in clearing away the shadow of doubt which hangs over Mr. Willets."

This information was so sudden, and such good news, that Burt could say nothing, and presently bade Harry good night and sought his own room, and hastily prepared himself for bed.

As he lay down he wondered if he would not hear some tiny voice whispering to him again in his dreams. Presently, these words of Irving's came to his mind:

"Thus man passes away; his name perishes from record and recollection; his history is as a tale that is told, and his very monument becomes a ruin."

These words furnished him food for thought and reverie. Finally sleep stole over him and he slumbered on in invigorating repose. Suddenly he started up, and in his sleep muttered,

"Awake, and let me dream again."

CHAPTER XVII.

DANIEL WEBSTER LAWSON, THE DETECTIVE'S NEW NAME.

A FEW days after the events narrated, Edward Willets took leave of his sisters, and started back to Hampton. Arriving there he again commenced his labors as operator, feeling greatly refreshed and rested from his trip.

Burt and Harry accompanied him home, none the wiser for the trip, although had Harry Baine only known it, little Pen Pembrooke was present when he bade Emily Willets good-by.

Had Burt Lester formed Richard Tobias's acquaintance, he might have accomplished the result of years of hard work in a single day, for Richard was the key that was destined to unlock some of the doors of mystery.

The detectives did not lose heart, but daily reported to Lawyer Westover.

The second day after their return to Hampton, Edith Brinkerhoff, Lin's sister, alighted from the train.

The old fruit-tree solicitor was at the depot at the time, and wondered at it, as Lin had never intimated to Willets, in any of their night conversations, that his sister was going away from Hampton. The detective knew this, for he had heard every word of conversation that had passed between them.

When Edith Brinkerhoff stepped off the train, she did not do as sisters usually do when they have been away from home. She did not even speak to Lin, although the detective thought their eyes met for an instant as she passed along the platform.

Where had she been? It was none of the detective's business, unless it had something to do with his case, and if she had been away on such a business trip as smuggling the money out of Hampton, how exasperated he would feel.

Why had she gone away when he was in Cinapolis? Why did she not speak to her brother on her return?

"I am only sure of one thing after all," Burt soliloquized to himself, "and that is, Willets and Lin Brinkerhoff are not partners in the theft. I cannot say that I am certain Willets took the money, although circumstantial evidence points to him as being the man. Nothing has ever looked suspicious against the boy until now, and that is the peculiar movements of his sister." Even in this Burt might be mistaken. That evening he told Harry Baine of the new clew, and what he had, detective-like, suspected, and concluded his remarks by saying: "I tell you, sir, we must try and find out where she has been."

"This is the first time in the chase," said Harry, "that I have felt we were getting down to business. Father told me that for some unaccountable reason he believed the boy was the guilty one, and that Willets was innocent."

"I know," replied Burt, thoughtfully, "that your father's impressions are against the boy, but a scientific detective must have a better base to rest on than mere impressions."

"I have spent two evenings at Mr. Brinkerhoff's," said Harry, "and perhaps I had better talk sweet to charming Edith, and follow up the vantage ground."

"That is the proper programme," said Burt, quickly, "and if she does not say anything about her trip, then we will know she does not care about any one knowing where she has been."

The following evening found Harry Baine walking leisurely along the street on which Mrs. Brinkerhoff lived. Fortune usually favored him in his undertakings, and this evening was no exception, for just as he drew near the house he heard some one coming along the sidewalk behind him, and before he had time to even glance over his shoulder, a feminine voice said: "Are you out for a walk, Mr. Gibbs?"

Harry hastily turned and stood face to face with Edith Brinkerhoff, and replied, saying, "Why, good evening, Miss Brinkerhoff; almost you startled me.

You came as suddenly on my vision as a ministering spirit."

"I feel so light and airy with these bunglesome overshoes on and my winter wraps, that I am sure I look like a rather healthy materialized spirit." A mellow, captivating little laugh followed this remark, and Harry Gibbs, as he called himself at Hampton, was quite sure he never heard such a clever, witty girl as was Miss Brinkerhoff in his life.

"Oh, you are trying to flatter me now, Mr. Gibbs; men are such flatterers, any way."

"Indeed, I am not," replied Harry, in his soberest tones. "I have made that remark a dozen different times."

"Yes," said Edith, "I guess you have told me that a full dozen times already in our short acquaintance, but I will wager you never told any one else you thought so."

"I assure you I have many times, Miss Brinkerhoff," replied Harry, with great earnestness.

"Come in and spend the evening with us, Mr. Gibbs, can't you?"

"Knowing your superior ability to entertain, to say nothing of your conversational powers, I can only accept your kind invitation and tender you my thanks for extending it to me."

"Mr. Gibbs," said she, as they came into the house, "you have been an apt scholar under Edward Willets' tutelage. You are almost as voluminous as he."

After they were comfortably seated around the glowing hearth, with Mrs. Brinkerhoff in her accustomed place, Harry observed that he had had a very pleasant trip while he was away from Hampton, and enjoyed it very much.

"Edith just returned yesterday," said Mrs. Brinkerhoff, looking up from her work. "She was away over a week at my cousin's, who lives at Milford, near Jacksontown."

"At Jacksontown?" said Harry, appearing not to have perfectly understood her remark, "why, I am acquainted some in that city. What is your cousin's name?"

"James Lawson. He is an attorney, but he does not reside at Jacksontown; he lives in a small village near there, by the name of Milford. Do you know him?"

"No, I believe not," replied Harry, then turning to Edith, whose face was terribly flushed, but perhaps only from the effects of the chilly air without, he said, "I forgot to tell you that we are to have a dress ball next Thursday evening, which promises to be the event of the season."

But somehow Edith is not thinking of grand balls as much as she is of something else.

In reply to Harry's information she merely inclines her head and says, "Is that so?"

Harry goes on quite glibly, speaking of little incidents of interest to Hampton society.

"Mr. Gibbs," says Edith, suddenly, "are you quite well acquainted with Mr. Drake, the old man who for several months has been soliciting orders for fruit trees?"

"Why, I see him every day," replied Harry, "and frequently dine at the same table with him."

"What do you think of him?" she abruptly inquired.

"Very nice old man to all appearances," said Harry, "but really, Miss Brinkerhoff, I could hardly express an opinion, for I very seldom talk with old men, they are so fossilized in their ideas and ways."

"I think," said Mrs. Brinkerhoff, "that Lin is mistaken in his surmises."

If she could have seen the annoyed look her daughter gave her she would have desisted from speaking farther, but she did not see, and went on, "Lin, my son, who, by the way, Mr. Gibbs, is a very bright boy, if he is my child, thinks that the old man, Uncle Jimmie Drake, as he calls himself, is some kind of a detective, and says he don't think he is an old man at all."

"Mother," said Edith, brusquely, "I do not think you should be quite so free about expressing home fireside talk."

"My land, Edith! what harm can possibly come of it?" queried the old lady.

"I don't know," answered her daughter impatiently,

that anything will ever come of it, nor do I know but something might."

Harry concluded not to remain any longer, and presently took his leave; but before he went away he had promised to escort Edith to the dress ball the following Thursday night.

Harry was not long in hunting Burt up, and telling him all that he had learned that evening.

"Come," said Burt, "let us go to our rooms."

As they walked silently along he gave himself up to thought. When their rooms were reached, he turned to Harry and said: "Well, by Heavens, old fellow, who would have thought it? Here is this boy, Lin Brinkerhoff, acquitted on trial of any knowledge of the affair, and then the innocent, unsophisticated chap tumbles to our little game and business, and as soon as we are away from Hampton, away goes this sister of his and carries the entire 'boodle' to safety. I don't say, Harry, that it is this way, but, by the eternal Heavens, it looks as if it might be. I will wager my head that he is the sharpest boy I ever struck."

"I think, Burt," said Harry, "that father's impressions may yet prove true."

"There is one thing evident," said Burt, thoughtfully, "that looks weak, and that is, old Mrs. Brinkerhoff's telling so much. Now Lin, if it should turn out that he is the thief, never could have done it alone, and if his sister is an accomplice, why not the mother?"

"No, sir; Burt Lester, you are wrong there," said Harry, feelingly; "I never will believe that motherly Mrs. Brinkerhoff knows anything about her children's knowledge of the affair, and the very reason that she does not know anything about it, is because, if she did, she would give her children up to justice rather than become a party to such a crime."

"Your faith in Mrs. Brinkerhoff seems unbounded," said Burt, "and I am inclined to view the matter in much the same way myself. Now, old boy, you watch Hampton. The little old man will pack his trunk and leave at twelve o'clock to-night, baggage and all. Am going to fill my orders for fruit trees, shrubbery, etc.," said he,

with a knowing look, "and don't be surprised, Harry, if the old fruit-tree man never shows up again." Then they got down to sober talk, and arranged their plans for future work. Harry Baine should remain in Hampton and play the role of "tank inspector" on both lines of railways, and Burt Lester would start for Milford, near Jacksontown, to learn what he could, and visit James Lawson, the attorney.

Accordingly Mr. Scudmore, the landlord of the Hampton Hotel, was informed that Uncle Jimmie Drake would start away that night. In due time the old man's baggage was taken over to the depot, a ticket purchased for Chicago and the baggage checked.

Not many days after this, the lumbering old stage-coach that came to Milford as many times a week as there are working days in a week, drew up before the old time-worn hotel, and sat down its only passenger. The lone passenger stared about him, reading two or three times the weather-beaten sign which announced "Entertainment for Man and Beast," and picking up his l uge satchel, walked awkwardly into the hotel, He was met at the door by the landlord, who looked as if he had just awakened from a sound sleep and was greatly dissatisfied with himself for having overslept and let the stage go by without seeing it.

Milford was rather a neat village, and undoubtedly presented a very restful look in the summer time.

It was now in the early days of March, and Nor'-westers were not uncommon followers of a pleasant day. By a pleasant March day, we mean such a one as our grandfathers would have called "weather breeders."

"How-d'y-do? Come in on the stage?" said the landlord to the new arrival.

"Yes, sir, jest got in," said the new comer.

"Scribble your name down there," said mine host, as he turned the greasy ledger around and presented a time-worn, corroded pen to his guest.

The stranger looked at the ledger, and then at the landlord, and bashfully said, "Write my name in the book?"

"Yes, sir," said the almost sympathetic landlord, for he felt that here was a "greeny" just from the farm, and he pitied such persons, for he himself came from a rural district when a young man, and it cost him dearly for the label "Experience."

The stranger pushed his hat back and his coat sleeve up, then picked up the pen awkwardly, dipped it two or three times in the ink, and as often as he did so, tried to write his name.

"Dang my buttons," he at last said, "this tarnel pen won't write."

"Try this one," said the landlord.

The stranger took the new pen, and with a great many grimaces and unnecessary efforts, inscribed in a very sprawling, coarse hand the name, "Daniel Webster Lawson, Pike Corners, York State."

This done, he scanned his work closely for a few moments, and laid the pen down very carefully, as if there was great danger of getting it out of repair. With a sort of bewildered look, he straightened up from the counter where lay the register, and sought the bottom of his breeches pockets, as if wondering if there was anything else incumbent on him to do.

"I see," observed the landlord, "that you are a stranger in these parts."

"You're gol-derned right I be," drawled out Daniel W. Lawson, "an' it's mighty lonesome, sort-a."

"Will you remain in Milford long?" queried the landlord.

"Just middlin'," replied Lawson; "maybe I'll stay longer, but don't know certain."

"I see you are from New York?" said the landlord in an interrogatory tone.

"Yes, I am a down-easter, I be," was the drawled out reply.

"Come to Milford on business, I suppose?" said the persistent landlord.

"Just sort-a like, not much, though," was the unsatisfactory reply.

"Perhaps you will want a team to drive around and

see the country?" said the curious and not-to-be-put-down landlord.

"Yer gol-derned right I will," replied Daniel W. Lawson promptly. "You see, Mr. Landlord," he continued, "I have come out West to kinder grow up with the country, and when I find a patch of land that suits me, I'll just stop and plant."

"Oh, you are a land-buyer?" said mine host, as he rubbed his hands together as much as to say, "I thought I could uncork him." "Are you any relation to Lawyer Lawson?"

"There is no Lawson that is a lawyer," said Daniel Webster, "that I know of, around Pike Corners."

"No, I mean the Lawyer Lawson of this place; right over there is his office." As he said this he gave his head a jerk toward the door and the street.

"Well, if I be, I don't know it," replied the country greeny, considerably interested.

Just at this moment, and before mine host could reply, a shrill voice came squeaking through the narrow hall from the kitchen, calling for "Reub, oh, Reub, Reuben Thompson, why don't you come here when I call you?"

Before the last notes had died away, the landlord hurried out of the office, wearing a very apprehensive look.

As soon as he was gone, Daniel Webster Lawson brightened up, and a twinkle came into his eyes that reminded one strongly of Burt Lester, the detective. He hastily opened the ledger and scanned the registered names. A smile parted his lips as he read the name of Edith Brinkerhoff. A moment later his face grew clouded, for it evidently was not written in a feminine hand, but scrawled down in a miserable, large, sprawly style. Just above it was a similar hand-writing, and the name it recorded was C. McGuffin.

"Yes," said Burt (for it was no other), "both names were written by one person, but who was that person? Where was C. McGuffin from?" There was nothing on the register to indicate the writer's residence. Then the date showed three days later than the time of Edith's leaving Hampton.

He closed the ledger, and strolled lazily across the room, and peered out of the window. Night was closing in, and the uncheerful, sounding March wind was growing louder and louder, as the temperature of coming night grew lower and lower.

Looking across the street, in the direction that Reuben Thompson, the landlord, had indicated with his nodding head, he saw a time-worn, squeaking sign swinging over an entrance that led up a flight of stairs. The name, "James Lawson, Attorney-at-Law," was printed in colors that once, no doubt, were gay, but they were now sadly blurred over, and destitute of any look of freshness.

Burt's first impulse was to cross over and give the lawyer a call, but on second thought he concluded not to venture into that gentleman's presence until he had had sufficient time to study over the discoveries made in the ledger.

The night came on, and Burt early sought his bed for a much-needed rest, as he had been constantly on the go for several days and nights past.

After breakfast the following morning, Daniel Webster Lawson produced from his pocket a clay pipe and a regular "down-East" bag of tobacco, and proceeded to have a morning smoke. He thus busied himself until he saw a gentleman come down the street and turn into the stairway. The pipe was put away, and the smoker, rising, proceeded to stretch and yawn in a very natural manner, and joined in the common regret that it was such a "'tarnal cold, blustry day." The snow was trying to come straight down, and it succeeded very well, it seemed, until the flakes got down near the house tops, and then the encircling belt of March wind beat and drove the falling snow in a slanting direction, and woe to the man who attempted to face the pelting particles unprotected.

Lawson stood looking out of the hotel window until he discovered a smoke belching forth in a black cloud from the lawyer's office-chimney, and then he quietly strode across the street, ascended the dark stairway, and tapped at the door, which was immediately opened by a

very short, fat, close-mouthed, small-eyed, beardless man.

"Come in," were the only words of welcome that fell on Daniel Webster's ears.

The invitation was accepted by the newcomer, but he seemed very awkward and much embarrassed, and was at a terrible loss to know what to do with his hands.

"Is this a lawyer's office?"

"Yes, sir, and I am the lawyer. What do you want?"

As soon as the lawyer said this he closed his mouth tight together again, as if he held some mighty secret, which he was fearful would escape him. The attorney's visitor took a chair unasked, and fumbled his hat with apparently very nervous hands, and replied: "My name, sir, is Daniel Webster Lawson, and I see the sign says Lawson was the lawyer's name, and it looked so humlike I thought I'd just step in. I'm boardin' at the hotel." As he said this he jerked his thumb over his shoulder toward the building across the street.

"Where are you from?" asked the lawyer.

"Pike Corners, York State," was the reply.

"A Yankee," said the lawyer, "from the rocky hills of New York?"

"I guess I be, and by darn, you hit the nail on the center when you said rocky hills, you did, swow."

"What can I do for you?" asked the attorney, very brusquely, not seeming to appreciate the compliment that the new-comer had paid to his astuteness.

"Well," said Daniel Webster, as he pushed his hat back and scratched his head in a brown study for a moment, "I don't kind-a like to see this here snow, as I wanted to look at some land."

"Oh, you are out West to look up the country?" observed the lawyer, "and purchase a home?"

"That's what I be," replied Daniel Webster, "that's just what I am here for, though I won't git my stuff so I can pay for any land till July next."

"That will make no difference, Mr. Lawson, I assure you," said the attorney, "and, by-the-way, while I don't

do very much in that line, yet I have a number of choice farms for sale, also some wild land that has just recently, very recently, indeed, been put on the market."

Burt thought that the old man was thawing out in fine shape, and for a full hour they conversed about western lands, the lawyer doing most of the talking, drawing bright pictures of the grand developments of the century. He then planned a trip into the country the first pleasant day, to which the detective readily assented.

Burt gazed at the long shelf full of books, as if it was all a new and novel sight to him. Finally, he said : "I wish I was a lawyer, I do, by gosh. You bet I wouln't work another condemned day if I had the knowledge that's in them books."

"You, like all boys from the rural districts," said Mr. Lawson, "have a very foolish notion in your head that a lawyer doesn't have to work, but if you had the experience that I have had, you would know how sadly you misjudge the profession. If you have any desire to study law," he continued, "I assure you my office and library are at your disposal."

"Well, by dad, Mr. Lawson," said Burt, "you talk fair enough, you do, I swan, and if I should find a farm that suits me, I will just avail myself of your offer and study law till my money comes."

"Very well," replied the attorney, "make my office your headquarters ; I want you to feel right at home."

In the course of a few days Burt found a farm that just suited him, and at once settled down to the study of law. He wrote Harry Baine every evening and received word from Hampton every day.

Burt was very prudent, and was getting on swimmingly with Lawyer Lawson.

Thus matters had rested for a full month, when the old stage came into Milford one afternoon in the first days of April, bringing a letter from Hampton which read as follows :—

"Dear Burt:

"A strange man got off midnight train here last night. Willets left the telegraph office in charge of Lin Brinkerhoff, and visited with the stranger till morning. They walked to the church-yard, and I followed them. Then they turned away into the woods, and in spite of all I could do, they gave me the slip for a full hour. They act like strangers to each other around the hotel. I am ready to follow if they go away. I will drop a note in the post-office here to L. Burton if I should have to leave suddenly. Better come at once.

"Hurriedly yours,

"HARRY BAINE."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LOST TRAIL.

BURT LESTER sat in his room at the little cramped boarding-house at Milford, in a deep brown study over Harry Baine's letter. The afternoon was wearing the April day into the shades of evening.

A gentle shower had fallen and bathed the earth in its loving caress: one of those caresses that start the sleeping to throw off the stupor of repose. So, also, did the April shower start the mother earth from her winter's slumber, and caused the first dawn of waking. An hour had now gone by since the letter was received, and still Burt sat at a writing desk in his room, just where he had seated himself when the seal of Harry's letter was broken. Here was another unlooked for, unexpected event, that seemed to contradict the whole theory that he had woven during the last month.

What had he learned in the past month? Simply nothing.

True his suspicions had been strengthened by Lawyer Lawson's reticence on the subject of Edith Brinkerhoff, and then there had been letters received bearing the

Hampton postmark, and others bearing the word "Mills" for a postmark, whose contents Burt Lester would have given his head almost to have glanced at. He proposed, however, to see these letters and still keep his head, although he would run the risk of losing it, perhaps, in seeing them.

But here was Harry Baine's letter, and that knocked all his own plans in the head. At last he rose from the desk and walked the room for a few moments, then halted before an old-fashioned mirror, and, after scanning the "gentleman in the glass" for a moment, said: "You are a fine-looking detective. You ought to have a chromo for shrewd work. What did you say, sir? Kittie Pembrooke? Well, by the eternal heavens above, you refer to that young lady again, and I'll spoil your face for you. Do you hear that, sir? Handsome? Well, who said she wasn't handsome? What! In love? That, sir, is an infamous lie! Burt Lester, I am ashamed of you! I am, by heavens, I am. What put all this foolishness into your head? What do you care for any woman, but your old mother? Nothing. That's spoken like a man, sir? What are you in love with, any way? The profession? Ah! the profession, that is better; now you are beginning to look and talk naturally. I am after you, old boy, by the powers above I am, and I'll give you trouble if you go tumbling head over heels in love with every pretty face you see. Now, mind sir, mind what I tell you!" With this he strode on past the glass, and, throwing aside his coat, proceeded to bathe his hands and face. Then with a coarse linen towel he wiped them dry, and rubbed a glow and look of health into his flushed features.

That evening he called on Lawyer Lawson, and told that gentleman, in his usual bashful and awkward way, that he wished to take a walk across the country to a town some fifty miles away, just to see the farming lands. Then the exercise of walking would do him good, for he was not accustomed to "settin' round so much."

"Very well," the lawyer replied. "How long will you be gone?"

"Oh, not more'n a month, I reckon," replied Burt.

"A month!" exclaimed the lawyer; "that is a good long time."

"Well," replied Burt, "maybe I won't be gone more'n middlin' long."

"All right," replied the attorney, smiling and shaking hands with Burt as he turned back into his house, thinking what a green country boy Daniel Webster Lawson was, anyway.

Early the next morning Burt settled his bill with Reub. Thompson, the hotel-keeper, and, with satchel on his back, started out across the country, walking briskly along for about a mile, until he came to a bridge over which the highway led him. Here he stopped, and sitting down by the roadside, waited until a team and carriage not far back came up with him.

"Hello, young man," said Burt to the driver, a lad in the last part of his teens, "where are you going with that team?"

"Down home," was the reply.

"Where is that?" queried Burt.

"About a quarter of a mile from here," the youth replied.

"How far is it to Jacksontown?"

"About seven miles," the boy answered.

"How much will you charge to take me over there?"

"What will you give?" was the evasive reply.

"I'll give you three dollars," answered Burt.

"I'll go for three and a half," said the boy, mentally soliloquizing, that if the stranger would offer three dollars, he surely would pay a half dollar more.

Burt read the business tact of his young friend, and replied: "Three dollars and a half! No, I'll not give but just even two dollars, and I call that a big price."

"Two dollars!" ejaculated the boy, "why you said three a moment ago."

"I guess you didn't understand me," said Burt; "two dollars is my offer."

"Two dollars," said the boy thoughtfully, and musing. "I believe he will raise it a half dollar just for the

asking," so turning to Burt he said: "I'll take you down for two dollars and a half."

"All right," said Burt, "it is more money than I ought to pay, but your team looks fresh. You remind me of a young man I once knew who could drive over more miles in an hour's time than any chap I ever did see."

This nettled the boy, and he quickly replied: "Well, stranger, you never saw me drive yet. I have got to go down home and tell them where I am going, and then I will be right back, and away we will go." As he said this he touched his spirited animals with his whip, and away they pranced.

Burt descended at the side of the bridge, stepped under the over-hanging wing, and was out of sight of any one who might pass along. His old satchel was then thrown open and a new toilet and make-up made. When he emerged soon after he looked like another being. His long mutton-chop whiskers, English coat and hat, together with an eye-glass suspended from the lapel of his vest, gave him quite a foreign look, so much so indeed that the boy, when he came back with his spirited horses, asked the distinguished looking gentleman "If he had seen anything of a country-looking chap?"

"Yes, sir," said the strange gentleman, "he was here not more than ten minutes ago. Are you the young gentleman that was to drive him to Jacksonville for two dollars?"

"No, I agreed to take him for two dollars and a half," replied the boy.

"The ragged rascal!" ejaculated the distinguished looking gentleman; "he told me two dollars, he did, for a fact, you know."

As the speaker said this he approached and climbed in the vehicle, and as he did so, said: "Drive on to Jacksontown and I will give you the two and a half dollars."

"Well, where is the other man?" asked the lad.

"Why, he didn't want to go—he was just speaking

to you for me. I fell in company with the bloody chap just before reaching the bridge, about half an hour before you came along, and told him of my desire to hire a conveyance to Jacksontown. While you were conversing with him I was down at the water's edge under the bridge, standing on that large flat rock, bathing my face and hands. I tell you, young fellow, those horses are goers, aren't they?"

"I should say so," said the boy, looking around triumphantly at his companion. Then remembering the country-looking chap again, he said, "I wonder who that chap was, any way, and where he went to?"

"He told me," replied the detective, "that his name was Daniel Webster Lawson, and that he had been studying law with an attorney by the name of Lawson, in the little village of Milford, which is near here, and that he was going across the country afoot, to a town about fifty miles south."

"Oh, yes," said the boy. "I know now. I have seen him lots of times during the last month, up at Milford."

Thus the conversation went on until Jacksontown was reached, and less than half an hour later found Burt Lester seated in the Hampton-bound train, looking very foreign and distinguished.

When Hampton was reached, he was still made up as an English "swell." He took himself to the hotel, and after carefully adjusting his eye-glass, proceeded to register as "Leslie Burton, Montreal, Canada," in a large round hand. He then went in to dinner, but could see nothing of Harry Baine.

During the afternoon he sauntered down to the post-office and asked for Mr. L. Burton's mail. The postmaster looked through the "B" box and found a single letter. After the distinguished foreign gentleman had carefully placed the letter in his pocket, he very leisurely walked back to the hotel, and when the privacy of his room was reached, he hastily broke the seal of the letter and eagerly perused its contents, which were as follows:

"DEAR BURT:

"I am writing this on the cars, and the stranger that visited with Willets is just across the car aisle, looking out of the window. He registered as T. Richards, at Hampton. He didn't say where he was from, neither did he buy a ticket, but paid his fare to the conductor. I don't know where he is going, but I am going to stay with him if possible. I will write you every day.

"Fraternally yours,

"HARRY BAINE."

Of course Burt could do nothing but report his moves to Lawyer Westover, and patiently wait for further word from Harry. In the meantime he kept a strict watch on both Willets and Lin.

While he is thus waiting, let us take an aerial flight to the Union depot building in Cinapolis, as the east bound train draws up at the platform.

Among the crowd of passengers who are pouring out of the cars in a regular stream, is Harry Baine, and he is looking closely after a fellow passenger who has just alighted, and as the stranger comes out where the light is better, we discover that he is no stranger, but an old acquaintance, Richard Tobias, little Pen's sworn friend.

As he moves away along the street, we see a muffled figure dart out of a dark alley and follow him, and close behind comes Harry Baine. He has his eye on Richard Tobias, and pays no attention to the stooped old man who is just ahead of him and just behind Richard. On, on, block after block, they go.

From the time Richard left the train he has not so much as glanced over his shoulder. Not so with the bent-over figure following. He watched Richard in front, and over his shoulder watched the shadowing figure of Harry Baine. If the old man's thoughts were reduced to words they would run like this: "That is my man, Dick Dare, ahead, or old Hinchey don't know; but who I wonder can this be behind? Surely, whoever it is, it is not me but Dick that he is shadowing. The wind blows me ill to-night unless I give this shadow the slip.

For over a month now I have been hunting that religious crank, Dick Dare, and when I find him I will also find the nice young man, Pen Pembrooke."

Thus the three glided along the deserted streets of Cinapolis, and had they been spirits of the departed, they could not have moved along with more deathlike stillness. Harry began to grow impatient, and imprudently commenced gaining on those ahead of him. By this time they were in the very heart of the city, and old Hinchey concluded that the chase was growing too warm. He determined to try a little game of stratagem on whoever it was that was shadowing.

Accordingly, when they came to a certain corner, where by some ill-luck the street lamp was not burning, and Richard turned down a dark unlighted street that led away from the main business avenue, old Hinchey walked very briskly in directly the opposite direction. Harry Baine followed him blindly, and quickened his pace, fearful that his prey would give him the slip at the next dark place. Several blocks were hurried by in this way, and, in the meantime Richard continued his homeward walk, wholly unconscious that old Hinchey and a detective had been following him, and also ignorant that the old 'possum, Hinchey, had done him good service by decoying the detective off his track. Presently the old 'possum came round a corner and stood in the full glare of a street lamp. He stopped, determined to then and there shake the shadower, whoever he was.

Round the corner Harry came almost on the run, but the only living thing that met his eager searching look was an old man seated on the door-sill of a shop. The light fell full on the old man's figure, and Harry saw at a glance that he seemed almost helpless with infirmity.

"Hello, old man," said Harry, "did you see anyone hurrying past here just now?"

"Yes, sir," replied the old villian, in a tremulous voice; "a man came 'round the same corner you did, and then run like all mad was after him, across the street and down that alley over the way."

"Did you know the face? Had you ever seen it before?"

"No, mister, didn't know the face, never seen it afore. The man looked sort o' frightened and I thought maybe he might be running away from somebody."

"That is just what he is a doing," replied Harry, very impatiently, while he took from his pocket a silk handkerchief, and brushed the perspiration from his flushed face. Then throwing the old man a piece of money, Harry Baine rushed on across the street, and turned down the dark unlit alley, madly in search of that which he had wholly lost track of.

He had no sooner started hurriedly across the street, then old Hinchey rose to his feet, as nimble and silent as a panther, and with much the same destructive feelings, stole quickly back around the corner of the building, and with great haste retraced his steps to the place where he had ceased following Richard; and then without pausing a moment he plunged into the darkness and followed down the street in the direction taken by him.

The April moon came bashfully up at last, climbing little by little, until at last it was above the houses and walls, above the tall chimneys and lofty church spires of Cinapolis. Then, and not until then, did Harry Baine turn his steps toward some place of shelter,

Cinapolis was a city of considerable magnitude, and had its share of stately hotels and whole blocks of eating-houses, boarding-houses, restaurants, etc. One of the most popular hotels in the city was "The Arlington." It was an aged establishment, yet carried a dignity with its age that was highly commendable and well worthy of imitation. It claimed to be the distinguished house at which Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, President Jackson, and other lights of less magnitude, stopped, when they visited Cinapolis. It also could show you the identical room that Anthony Trollop's mother occupied during her sojourn in that city, aud also the bed room in which Charles Dickens slept when he made his first visit to America. Thus it had had its literary guests, as well as its political heroes. It was to this distinguished hotel that Harry Baine wended his way late at night, and sought a much-needed rest.

It was late the next morning when he woke from his slumbers, greatly refreshed.

A good hot breakfast was served him which fully restored his usual happy and contented state of mind.

Fully? No, not fully, for there lurked a dissatisfied and regretful feeling about his poor performance as a detective, that kept him from enjoying the greatest complacency of feelings.

After breakfast he lighted a cigar, and while he smoked searched the city directory for the name T. Richards, and found no less than four Thos. Richardses; the address of each he penciled down. One was a carpenter, two were foundrymen, and one a hardware merchant. Closing the directory, he seated himself at the office writing table, and hurriedly wrote a long letter to Burt. This done, he engaged a barouche, and set out to call on all the Thos. Richards in Cinapolis. The carpenter and joiner who wore that name was a long, lean sort of a man who had the largest feet, Harry thought, he ever saw in his life. The detective explained that he was looking for a Mr. Richards, and had found several Thos. Richards in the directory, and his only way to find the one he was looking for was to call on all of them. This was a satisfactory explanation to the carpenter, and soon after he drove on to the foundry. Just above the place where the barouche halted was a window, and out of that window a pair of eyes was looking. The owner of the eyes was seated at a writing desk, attending to a heap of correspondence.

He saw a man alight whom he recognized as Mr. Gibbs, of Hampton; at least that was the name Mr. Willets knew him by. The foundry policeman met Mr. Gibbs, and they had a short conversation; then they walked away together, and entered the foundry. A half hour went by before Mr. Gibbs returned to the barouche, and when he did it was hastily driven away, no doubt to the store of the hardware merchant. A little later, as the policeman was walking near the office, Richard motioned him to enter, and asked him, "Who was that gentleman that had just went through the foundry with him?"

"That, sir," said the policeman, in a low voice, "was one of my kind, a detective, who is hunting up all the Thos. Richards in the city. I told him, sir, to come and see you, and perhaps you could tell him more about it than I could, but he said he was in a very great hurry, and hadn't time."

"Is there anyone by that name in the foundry?" asked Richard.

"Oh yes, sir," replied the man with brass buttons, "there are two young men by that name; they are cousins, but neither of them is the Richards that the detective is looking for."

"That will do," said Richard, and he picked up his pen and continued his work.

That evening as he returned home, he dropped a letter, a big fat one, in the mail box, and it was directed to Edward Willets, Esq.

When he arrived at Mr. Dorris's he found the cloth already spread and tea in waiting for his coming. Soon after the family were seated at the table, enjoying the witticisms of handsome Emily Willets and the wise sayings of little Pen, who seemed to have grown much older in the last month, and was more delicate than ever. Mr. Dorris took his leave and started for the foundry to work, and little Pen sat down close to Richard's knee, while he listened to what the latter had to tell him of Hampton.

'Did you see my little sister Bertha?" asked Pen.

"Yes, I stopped at your aunt Zurilda's to get a drink of water, and got a good look at the little darling, and I tell you, my boy, I felt just like taking the child in my arms and carrying her away."

"Where else did you go?" said Pen, while he brushed the gathering tears away from his eyes.

"Well, Mr. Willets and I took a walk, and went by the graveyard, and I could not pass it without going in and standing again right where I did that night when you prayed over your mother's grave. From there we walked out into the woods and visited the old cave where you ate your first lunch of my preparing. After that we came out into the road, just where we did that night

when we left Hampton, and I showed Mr. Willets where we stopped to listen to his speech."

"What is that you are saying about my brother?" asked Emily, as she came into the room.

"Nothing that was to his discredit, I assure you," replied Richard, good-naturedly.

"Emily, you promised to sing for me to-night," said Pen.

"I know I did, and I have just come in to keep my word." Saying this she seated herself at the piano, and after running her fingers lightly over the prelude, sang in plaintive strains and soft-toned melody these words:

"Oh, no! I never will grow old,
Though years on years roll by,
And silver o'er my dark brown hair,
And forever dim my laughing eye."

She seemed to throw her whole soul into the beautiful words, which possibly were prophetic of her own future. Had she told her thoughts they would have been of one whom she supposed far away, but who in reality was in hearing distance of her singing. Yes, Harry Baine was actually walking along the opposite side of the street to feast his ears, if an opportunity presented itself, on Emily Willets' enchanting music.

Pen thanked Emily for the song, and soon after he and Richard were in their own room. The little Bible was brought forward and a chapter read, and then Pen in earnest supplication returned thanks to the great Law Giver of the universe for Richard's safe return, and his little sister's health, and for all the blessings of life. Then he prayed feelingly for fallen humanity, and asked for strength to be given him to let his feeble light so shine in the world, that others, seeing it, might be constrained to turn their faces heavenward, and make the God of Isaac and Jacob their God also, and embrace the Divine principles of Christianity. After the prayer was finished, Richard was thoughtful for a long time.

"What is it, Richard, that you are thinking so earnestly about?"

"Are you sure, Pen," said Richard, "that there is a God, and that we will live again after death in another world?"

"Richard," said Pen, as he came to his friend's side and looked deep into his eyes, "you surely do not doubt. You do not, you cannot think or believe, dear Richard, that this earth is man's only abiding place? No, no! you cannot believe that life is but a bubble, an empty bubble, that has its existence by chance and is permitted to float a few days at most on the cheerless waves of eternity and then vanish and sink into nothingness. No, Richard, you cannot believe that; else why do we have such glorious aspirations, which come leaping forth involuntarily from the soul of man, refusing to be satisfied, but continually seeking and clamoring for a higher existence beyond the clouds. Yes, Richard, I do believe with all my heart that there is a great and allwise God who rules the universe, and that after death there is a realm, a bright and heavenly realm, where the burnished colors of the rainbow never, never fade away, where there is no night, and where the spirits of our dead fathers and our dead mothers live on and on in eternal happiness, and that they will gather round us when we cross over, and welcome us to our final home."

"There is a Scotch ballad," said Richard, as he brushed away the falling tears, "that is called 'My Ain Countrie.' The lines I remember run like this:

"'He is faithfu' that hath promised that some gladsome day the King
He'll keep his tryst wi' me, at what hour I dinna ken;
But he bids me still to wait, an' ready aye to be,
To gang at any moment to my ain countrie.
So I'm watching aye, an' singing o' my hame as I wait,
For the soun'ing o' his footfa' this side the gowden gate,
God gie his grace to ilk ane wha listens noo to me,
That we a' may gang in gladness to our ain countrie.'"

"That was a tender little melody my sister 'Rilla used to sing to me, for it was a favorite of mine; and your earnest words to night, my dear Pen, about the world beyond, makes me feel as I used to when my sister

sang that Scotch ballad, that somewhere, someplace, beyond the doubts and darkness, beyond the errors of philosophy and Voltaireism, beyond the skepticisms and dissentings of this life, there must be a country where the spirits of the children of men shall meet again.

"Yes, my dear Pen, I do believe in Almighty God,—I believe the Scripture that you read to-night where it says:

"'I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord. He that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.'"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DETECTIVE MEETS MCGUFFIN.

OLD Hinchey, as we have already seen, hastily retraced his steps after misleading Harry Baine, and followed after Richard Tobias.

Notwithstanding he hurried along the deserted streets with remarkable speed for an old man, yet he was wholly unable to come up with him, and after an hour's fruitless search he returned to the miserable attic quarters from which Richard and little Pen had run away.

When he climbed the rickety old stairs that were growing more feeble every day, he knocked for admission, not a loud boisterous knock but a soft gentle rap, for old Hinchey was a very considerate being, and did not wish to awaken any of his neighbors or attract the attention of any of the police force, should they happen to be passing that way.

Possibly his soft knocking was from prudential reasons; but had you asked him, the falsehood that was ever trembling on his lips would have replied, "Consideration for my good neighbors who are asleep."

The door slowly opened, and the old man passed in. Then it hastily closed, and had you listened attentively you would have heard the clank of the fastenings.

The first words that met old Hinchey's ears, after the fastenings of the door were firmly secured, came from a broad-chested, full-bearded man with a coarse, gruff voice, and, in no pleasant tone, it asked: "Where in thunder have you been so late?"

As old Hinchey answers, he snuffs the candle and causes a better light to illumine the cobwebed rafters. By the light thus made we can still see that same unmeaning grin, the same old fangs of teeth, the same dirty, bristly-bearded countenance, the same untidy, slovenly habit, and frowsy hair hanging shaggily about his neck and ears.

"Oh, my good brother," old Hinchey says, "I was close on the track of the dear young man you came to see about."

"Did you find him?" hastily and impatiently asks his companion, who is none other than C. McGuffin, Esq.

"No, but I saw that religious crank, Dick Dare," answered old Hinchey with a hollow, croaking laugh, "and when I find him I will find where the young man is."

All of Hinchey's laughing and smiling seems to avail nothing with McGuffin, for he looks as glum and black as a rain cloud.

"Well, where is Dare?" he asked very brusquely.

"I will tell you all about it," replied Hinchey in a submissive, fawning tone; and he at once gave his brother a full account of all that had happened that evening.

After this the brothers fell to earnest talking and planning about their future moves.

"I tell you, Henry," McGuffin was saying, "I am about through with this sort of life, I am, by thunder I am. Tobs is giving me considerable annoyance, or at least I imagine he is, and I want to get rid of him. He is getting to be devilish independent, and I find myself continually fretting and worrying about him. He has received several letters from some person or persons, and I think he knows where this lad Pen is. Now, I don't give a copper about the boy, only he knows too

much to be let run, as is the case with my man Tobs. You see, Henry," continued McGuffin, warming up a little, "I have my ambitions as well as any other man, and one ambition is to go to Congress. I have already got the ground-work planned, and propose putting the rolling stock on this fall and sweeping the district, and then I'll be the Hon. C. McGuffin, M. C., from the Second District."

"Couldn't you give me a mail route of some kind?" asked old Hinchey, with a cunning twinkle in his eye.

A frown overspread McGuffin's face, and he answered crustily, "Don't allude to impossibilities, Henry, but confine yourself to sensible talk."

Old Hinchey bit his lips, but said nothing. Had his thoughts been put in words they would have run something like this: "Sensible talk, hey? Well, my dear brother, I will make you think it is sensible talk before you are the Hon. C. McGuffin, Member of Congress, very long. Impossibilities, hey? Well, my ambitious brother, you will find it is impossible to a Congressman from the Second District and not recognize me as your brother, unless you want to pay me handsomely to keep shady."

All this passed quickly through the old 'possum's mind, although he said nothing, except to exclaim, "Ah, what a smart, ambitious, shrewd brother I have got."

C. McGuffin in his wicked life, yet laudable ambitions, had forgotten, as many men do in all the walks of life, that "Your nearest kith and friend is a better friend to himself than he is to you;" and so he talked glibly on of his possessions, of his many broad acres, his large herds of blooded cattle, and his mammoth barn well-filled with elegant horses; and when he had finished old Hinchey, with his best feigned forlorn expression, yet with great suavity in his voice, replied:

"Ah, my dear brother, you are indeed a smart and a wealthy man. You see my home, brother; it is very cheerless and desolate, and in the winter time I almost freeze."

"Why don't you get a suite of rooms at some good hotel, and live like somebody?" asked his brother.

"Yes," old Hinchey responded, "why don't I; simply because I can't afford it. Every dollar I had in the wide world was stolen from me by that crank, Dick Dare, and I am left in my old age penniless, as you might say."

The old man said this so earnestly that McGuffin actually believed the statement.

"I don't wonder you wish to find this man Dare," said he.

"You bet your life, I want to find him," said old Hinchey, winking and nodding his head, "but brother," he continued in a lowered voice, "how much would it be worth to you to have Tobs out of the way, also this lad Penfield Pembrooke? Now, my dear rich brother, you are talking to one who is your own blood, and who is now an old man and very poor. I haven't any money at all—all gone; be liberal, that's a dear, good brother."

McGuffin did not answer at once, but sat looking hard at the sputtering blaze of the candle. His right leg was crossed over the left knee, the left arm lay carelessly across his lap, while with his right hand he held the bowl of his large briar-root pipe, and ever and anon he would remove it from his mouth long enough to puff out a cloud of smoke, and then bury the stem in his hairy face again.

Old Hinchey sat leaning forward, resting his elbows on either knee,rubbing his greasy hands together, and watching with cat-like keenness every expression that plays over his brother's face like fretful clouds.

Finally the pipe came out of McGuffin's mouth long enough for him to say, "One thousand dollars." Then he went on smoking again, still looking steadily at the candle's blaze, nor did he take his eyes away from the winking light, or seem the least moved when old Hinchey exclaimed, in a tone of breath-taking astonishment: "A thousand dollars! only a thousand dollars! Oh, dear! oh, dear! and such a wicked job, too. No, no, my rich brother, I'll do the job for ten thousand dollars, and that is cheap—dirt cheap."

This last announcement brought the Phenomenal McGuffin, Esq., to his senses very quickly.

He dropped the pipe on the table, started to his feet and repeated: "Ten thousand dollars? Never! never! I can do the job for enough less myself, by thunder, I can, and I'll do it, too."

"Not very good business, my brother, for a congressman to be engaged in," said old Hinchey, with a mocking grin.

"Look here, Henry," said McGuffin, almost fiercely, "don't trifle with me. You haven't forgotten, I hope, that you are in my power."

"In your power, my brother?" said Hinchey, in his blandest voice.

"Yes," answered McGuffin, in thundering tones, "in my power. Don't I know that it was you who killed old man Macley, Leroy Pembrooke's father-in-law, and wasn't it you who stole his money?"

"I believe you and I divided the spoils of that little game," replied old Hinchey, "but as to killing the nice and respectable old man, I have no remembrance of any such work; though, if I had, you and I would suffer equally, as we were working together in all we did—were partners, you know, my brother. Maybe you think, my brother, that I don't know enough to keep you from going to Congress, or if you were a congressman, enough to unseat you and cause an unexpected vacancy to occur in the second district. Yes, I know enough to confiscate your property and send you to the penitentiary for a long, long time."

As Hinchey made these last remarks, he retreated behind the old rickety table on which the light was sitting, all the time keeping his eyes on those of his brother, not knowing but "Greek had at last met Greek."

"I will," said McGuffin, in a deep, hollow-sounding, guttural tone, "give you the ten thousand dollars for the job, but," he added, trying to look with a brother's compassion on his brother, "I would not give it if you had not lost all your possessions."

On McGuffin's saying this, old Hinchey resumed his seat, as also did his brother, and for a full hour they con-

versed about the general details of the work in hand, each brother firmly believing in his own mind that the other was the very essence of lying, deceitfulness, and untold crime, and when at last they retired to catch a couple of hours' sleep before morning came on, each pretended to sleep soundly, each snored most unmercifully, but they were in reality both wide awake, and on the defensive.

Thus whiled away the hours for these brothers, who all their lives had followed the ways of ungodliness; each knowing the other to be as unscrupulous as Satan. The lamp of brotherly love had long since been extinguished by the remorseless, bony hand of selfish avarice. Their consciences were surely seared over "as with a hot iron." How appropriate seems these lines of Robert Burns:

"Oh, Man! While in thy early years
How prodigal of time,
Mis-spending all thy precious hours,
Thy glorious youthful prime.'

Early the next morning the brothers arose, and notwithstanding old Hinchey urged McGuffin very hard to remain and breakfast with him, that gentleman was determined, and bade the old man a very brotherly good morning, and betook himself away.

The rickety stairway cried out piteously enough as he hastened down it, and when the solid earth was once more reached, he breathed a sigh of relief as he inhaled the pure morning air. As he strode on toward the fashionable Arlington Hotel, he muttered to himself, "My brother is a devil, and every board in that creaking old stairway cries out as if they were his imps."

On reaching the Arlington House he took up the pen, and in a large bold hand registered, C. McGuffin, Mills, Indiana. He scrutinized what he termed his fine looking signature for a moment, and then looking up at the clerk, asked in a pompous voice: "Got a good room for me?"

"We have no other kind of rooms, sir, at the Arlington," replied the clerk, with a very courteous bow, and then without giving the Phenomenal McGuffin time to

answer, he added, "Would you like to be shown to your room at once, or would you prefer having your breakfast first?"

"I'll breakfast first," was McGuffin's crisp reply.

Soon after he was enjoying one of those rare steaming hot breakfasts for which the Arlington to this day is proverbial, and then sought his room to sleep. He was used to night work and day sleeping, at intervals, as we have seen heretofore.

Soon he was in a deep sleep, from which he did not wake until late that evening. When he did awake, he rang for the bell-boy, and ordered his supper sent to his room, with a bottle of porter at the side.

This order was carefully obeyed, and McGuffin ate his supper and drank his porter, and felt that this would be his style of living when he lived in Washington and was known the nation over as the "Honorable" from the Second District.

The next morning he rose from his bed with not the clearest head in the world, and descended to the breakfast room.

He had no sooner taken his seat, than Harry Baine was shown a seat at the same table. As the two confronted each other they bowed and passed the time of day, as strangers usually do when they meet in like manner, having a table to themselves.

"Now," thought McGuffin, "perhaps this is a reporter for some political paper, and perhaps I had better cultivate his acquaintance."

Harry, on his side of the table, was thinking to himself, "Perhaps this is McGuffin. His signature on the register looks very much as if just such a looking man had written it."

McGuffin was the first to speak.

"A fine April morning," said he.

"Yes, indeed," replied Harry, "it is a beautiful spring morning."

"Excuse me," said McGuffin with affected suavity of manner, "but may I inquire your name?"

"Certainly," replied Harry, with open frankness; "my name is Harry Gibbs."

"Ah, thank you, sir," said McGuffin, wiping his bearded face with his silk handkerchief, "the reason I asked was that you reminded me of a schoolmate of mine when I was a boy. His name was Baine—Steve Baine, considerable older than myself, but then we were schoolmates for a short time, nevertheless."

To say that Harry was surprised would hardly express it, but he determined to be a very voluminous listener and rather a deft talker, and when he did talk, to say nothing. While he was trying to think just what he ought to say, McGuffin spoke again and said: "Mr. Gibbs, will you join me in drinking this bottle of wine? C. McGuffin is my name, from the Second Congressional District."

"Ah, certainly, sir," said Harry, "I am glad to meet you,' and he meant every word of it. "From the Second Congressional District? Haven't I heard your name mentioned in connection with Congressional affairs?"

"Not so loud, if you please," said McGuffin, coloring to his very ears with pleasure, for this was his weakest of weak points. "Yes, sir, Mr. Gibbs, some of my friends are determined and won't take no for an answer —they say I have got to be a candidate this fall. Personally, Mr. Gibbs, I would much prefer the peaceful quiet of my country home, where I can have the cheering society of my wife and children about me, but I have at last given in to the earnest entreaties of many friends, and will no doubt be a candidate before the coming Congressional convention."

"Your political faith," said Harry, "is—"

"Is the pure and unadulterated old Jacksonian Democracy," interrupted the Phenomenal McGuffin.

"Certainly, certainly," said Harry, "but what I was about to observe was, that your political faith is worthy of just such retiring men, Mr. McGuffin, as you are;—men who do not seek the office, but reluctantly consent to what seemingly is inevitable. So far as your political creed is concerned, I assure you it is well known here among the editorial fraternity. Your fame, Mr. McGuffin, has preceded you."

Here they good naturedly drank another "bumper"

to McGuffin's seeming embarrassment, and Harry Gibbs's seeming frankness.

When the glasses were again set down, the Phenomenal said: "Excuse me, Mr. Gibbs, but if my suspicions are correct you are connected with the press?"

"Your suspicions, Mr. Guffin, are correct. I am on the editorial department of *The Herald*."

"Give us your hand," said McGuffin, with enthusiasm, "you are just the one person above all others that I wanted to see."

"Harry extended his hand and thought to himself, "Old man, your sentiments and mine are precisely the same."

After breakfast was over, and they had returned to the office room, McGuffin called for cigars. The clerk with his usual courtesy set out a box of Havanas.

"Them your best?" asked McGuffin brusquely.

"Those are good ten-cent goods, sir," said the clerk, "but we have higher priced cigars. These," said he, "are two for a quarter, and these," he continued setting out still another box "are twenty-five cents straight."

"That's what I want," said the Phenomenal, "that's my kind of smoking. Here, Mr. Gibbs, take charge of this half-dozen cigars, and I will stow the other half-dozen away. There are your three dollars, sir. Now, Gibbs, let's get out here by ourselves and have a comfortable, after-breakfast smoke."

As they walked away Harry said: "I tell you, Mr. McGuffin, you have the regular old politician swing, you have, by George."

"Oh, I have seen some of the world in my day," replied the Phenomenal, boastfully, "and you bet your life I always see the easy side of it. I eat the best, drink the best and smoke the best, at home or abroad. Now, Mr. Gibbs, to business. I want to give you a sort of a biography of myself, and I want it written up in *The Herald* in big shape,—a regular political boomer—a screecher sort of an article. I have the collateral to pay for it, and don't you doubt it." As he made this last remark he brought his heavy big hand down in a bullying way on his fat purse, as much as to say, "Damme, there

is no limit to the power of money, and C. McGuffin knows it, you bet."

"I fully understand you, sir," said Harry, nodding and winking in a wise fashion. "I, sir, am the man who wrote up the Hon. Mr. Henlish, and you know what a boom it gave him. I also wrote up the Hon. Mr. Pendrix, and as you might say, made him what he is. I never will forget my first interview with the Hon. Mr. Henlish. We were sitting right here, just about where we are sitting now. He only had a reputation, at that time, of fleecing the poor. In fact, his reputation rested on the wrecks of financial ruin, that followed in his wake as naturally as blown-down trees, flattened grasses and demolished buildings follow in the hurricane's track. But he had money. That tells the story. You are a shrewd, far-seeing business man, Mr. McGuffin, and understand the 'ways and means.' Now, come to my room and give me the facts which I will need, in order to give you a booming send-off."

To say that McGuffin felt flattered to be thus invited to the room of the political editor of *The Herald*, would not express his elated feelings.

He chuckled as he followed Harry up a flight of stairs, and soliloquized to himself that the twenty-five cent cigar investment was already paying a handsome dividend.

"Now," said Harry, after they had reached his room and the door had been closed, "I am like a physician—I want to know everything about your past life. The worst, the very worst, as well as the best, the very best. Everything that is good and in your favor I put down in this book, and everything that's against you I put down in this other dark-colored book. The reasons for this, are many, and I presume, to a man of your keenness self evident. Whenever there is a charge made against you by the opposition, we turn to your record, and if we find the charge is substantially true, why we treat it with contempt and homeopathic doses of derision; but if we find the charge to be false, then we court investigation, and pour into the opposition the strongest allo-

pathic, double-strength doses that can be found in the market."

"I see," said McGuffin, as he scratched his head in a deep brown study.

His answers came slowly, and when he got to where his brother Henry, old Hinchey, was sent to the penitentiary when a young man, he stopped altogether. He could not make up his mind to tell it, nor did he. Finally he said in a half desperate way, "Look here, Mr. Gibbs, I don't like this, by thunder, I don't. Now, how do I know that you are the political editor of *The Herald*, or any other paper? Damme, I dislike most wretchedly to give myself away so completely, unless I know for certain who I am talking to."

"Mr. McGuffin," said Harry, in a tone of astonishment, "I am greatly surprised at your words, but since you have spoken so plainly I will not take the facts of your biography at present, but will call with Mr. Hamlin, the proprietor of *The Herald*, at your house when we visit the Second District next week, or the week after, and you can, in the meantime, knowing what will be expected of you, brighten up your memory."

"That suits me better, Gibbs, for really I can't remember," said McGuffin. "Mind, I don't doubt you, Mr. Gibbs, by thunder, I don't, but a real careful, shrewd man ought to know who he is making a confession to before he spits out some facts that I will have to tell, I suppose."

"Mr. McGuffin, did you ever know an attorney to give his client away?"

"I don't know as I ever did, though I don't doubt that some of 'em is not a pesky bit too good to do it."

"Well," continued Harry, "attorneys do not tell their clients' secrets because they are sworn by their oath of office not to, and if an attorney's obligations to his client are binding, know now and for all time that an editor's pledge to his political favorites are sacred."

"All right, Mr. Gibbs," said McGuffin, as he consulted his watch, "but I will have to be going if I get off on that ten-thirty train, I only have ten minutes to get to the depot."

"Is it so late as that?" inquired Harry in surprise, as he caught up his hat, and said he had to go to the ten-thirty train himself, and would accompany Mr. McGuffin to the depot. The Phenomenal paid his bill, and in company with Harry Baine was rapidly driven to the station.

CHAPTER XX.

THE INIMITABLE INTERVIEWS THE DETECTIVE.

AFTER Harry Baine had seen C. McGuffin safely seated on the out-going train, he felt a sense of relief steal over him.

"Burt Lester," he muttered to himself, "shall be with me when I take that old dodger's pedigree."

There was another train to leave in just one half hour which would overtake the ten-thirty train at the junction, and thus passengers leaving on either would arrive at Hampton at the same hour, twelve o'clock that night.

Harry Baine waited until the train was under full headway and there was no chance for McGuffin to get off, even if he wanted to. Then the young detective called a cab and was at once driven with all speed to "The Arlington," where, on reaching his room, he transformed himself into rather an elegant old man, with a great amount of dignity and formality still remaining. He then hurried out to the cab with his large gripsack, and reached the depot just in time to catch the train.

At three o'clock that afternoon, Harry Baine reached the junction, and there walking back and forth was C. McGuffin, with his eyes fastened on the platform and hands crossed behind him.

It was rather a raw day for the middle of April, and he had his coat buttoned up closely.

As soon as the train stopped, the detective alighted and sought the through car for Hampton, that had been set out by the other train.

He soon found it, and climbed up the car platform

very slowly, just like any rheumatic old gentleman, and deposited his satchel on the seat adjoining that where lay McGuffin's luggage.

Here the old man seated himself and looked out of the car window. He hadn't long to wait, for the train soon started.

Presently in came McGuffin and took his seat, bowing very low to the dignified old man.

Harry hardly knew what sort of a professional man to play the role of, but concluded he would look very grave and sedate, yet withal show a disposition to talk.

They had ridden along for several miles, exchanging an occasional observation, when C. McGuffin, Esq., seemed suddenly to remember something that apparently had been on his mind considerably, at different times, but forgotten until now, when it came back to him with sudden vividness. Hastily turning to the old gentleman he said: "Pardon me, sir, but you are an old gentleman and doubtless have had a wide experience. There is one question that I would like to ask you, and that is this: Do you know anything about or believe anything in fortune-telling?" He had let his voice drop to a low key at the last part of his question, and looked straight at the detective.

"You have," said the old man, in a tremulous voice, "read, as it were, my weak point. I, sir, have spent years of my life investigating that problem."

"Excuse me, sir," said McGuffin, rising, "but permit me to put your satchel over here with mine, and join you on that seat. I am interested, I am, by thunder, I am," said he, as he crowded in by the side of the detective.

"There is no such thing," the old man observed, "as telling fortune by cards, but the past and the future may be read through a clairvoyant. I am a clairvoyant, sir, myself, and tell fortunes, yet I do not know any man's fortune or anything that I say when I am possessed of my governing spirit."

"Well, how in the thunder do you know then that you tell fortunes?" asked McGuffin.

"Why, how do we know anything?" replied the old

man. "Those who consult me say that I tell their past truthfully, and because of that, believe my prophesies are also true."

"How much do you charge for telling a person's past, present, and future?" asked the Phenomenal.

"I charge one hundred dollars," replied the old man, "but I could not tell your fortune unless you chose to go on to California with me."

"Going to California, eh?" queried the Phenomenal, thoughtfully. "By thunder," he said, "I wouldn't begrudge the hundred dollars if you would tell my fortune."

"I discover that I can tell you some things, now," said the old man, "for the current of magnetism is very strong, sitting so near to me as you do." At this Harry Baine closed his eyes, and after nodding and jerking awhile said, "You are a very rich man. You have been away from home, and are now returning. You have been to some large city. Ate your breakfast in company with a young man. You are ambitious, you want to be Governor, Senator, Congressman, or something like that. You made the young man, with whom you talked, very angry. He is a great newspaper man. He will come to see you at your home, and another gentleman will be with him. Don't make him angry again. Tell him everything he asks you to communicate. You will go to some large city soon. Will leave your wife and children at the farm. Will stay a long time away from there. Everybody will be talking about C. McGuffin, Esq.—there—there," said the old man, as he clasped his hands over his eyes, and then slowly removed them and looked around in a bewildered way as if he had been asleep, and could hardly remember where he was.

"Damme, that beats my time, it does, by thunder, it does," exclaimed the Phenomenal McGuffin.

"Did you know anything you said?" he inquired.

"Nothing, not a word," feebly responded the old gentleman. "Did I tell you anything that convinced you of my clairvoyant power?"

"I should say you did," said McGuffin, enthusiasti-

cally, "you even told my name. You don't call that," said the Phenomenal, "a complete thing, I hope?"

"No," said his old companion, as he bent close to McGuffin's ear, "no, I could tell you of crimes, shortcomings, and robbery, that you would not like to hear me speak of. Shall I tell you what I allude to?"

"No, no, never mind; I am satisfied, anyway," said McGuffin, greatly subdued, and he proceeded to draw forth his purse and count out one hundred dollars, which he handed over to the old man.

McGuffin was sleeping soundly when Hampton was reached, wholly unconscious that the old man had pilfered his pockets of all the letters he had in them.

Hampton was not a large place, therefore Dame Gossip was very active, and Harry knew that it would be much better to get off the train in the same make-up that he proposed to wear during his sojourn with the good people of that place. Accordingly he found an opportunity, before reaching the station, to remove his gray hair and beard, and come out as Harry Gibbs in fine shape. When he stepped off the train, Willets was the first man he saw, and that glowing gentleman seemed very glad, indeed, to see him.

"Hold on a moment, Mr. Gibbs," said the Inimitable, "wait until the train pulls out. I want to see you about a matter pertaining strictly to business."

"I do wonder," thought Harry to himself, "what this voluminous chap can want of me. One thing is certain, and that is, he don't suspect my identity."

The brass-buttoned conductor at last waved his lantern, and the old engine horse again began to cough out the wondrous strength of steam, and the train glided away in the midnight darkness.

"Come in," said the Inimitable, "I am all alone this evening. That charming youth, Lin Brinkerhoff, who for many months has been my faithful companion through the weary watch of night, is taking a lay off."

"You observed, Mr. Willets," said Harry stiffly, "that you desired to see me. The hour is very late, and unless the business in hand is very urgent, I shall ask

you to postpone the matter until I have had some sleep."

"Mr. Gibbs," said the Inimitable, "sit down and let me entreat you to make yourself perfectly at home. What I wish to see you about is like uncorked champagne—it will spoil by standing; therefore, pardon me for starting the ball to rolling by saying, my dear sir, that there are sacred feelings wrapt tenderly about the heart of every man, woman and child in the whole world. Permit me, Mr. Gibbs, to exclaim, as it were, in the language of the Holy Writ: 'For in much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.' These biblical words are especially true in my case at the present time, and possibly may prove the same in your own case, Mr. Harry Baine!"

"My God! what does this mean?" gasped Harry, coming to his feet.

"Be seated, Harry, my charming fellow," said Willets, "be seated and be calm, be cool and collected. Here, sir,—drink a glass of water from this rusted old tin dipper, and verify a remark that I have often made, that it mattereth not whether the vessel be a cup of burnished gold or a raw gourd, the cooling draught tasteth the same. Pardon me, sir," continued the Inimitable Willets, "for making the observation, but my suspicions are that your flushed face, parched lips and fevered brow are wholly chargeable to the climate: deucedly torrid just now, isn't it?"

"Mr. Willets," said Harry (settling back in that same old arm-chair that held Willets on that memorable night when Miss Zurilda Goodsil, in a not over-polite note, dunned him for his past-due board), "I wish you would explain yourself."

"Just what I am going to do," promptly responded Willets. "Now, sir," he went on, as he settled himself so that all his weight came on one leg and brought his open left hand palm upwards, and laid the long, big-jointed index finger of his right hand therein, and ever so often lifted up and dropped it back again as he talked. "You want an explanation, 'Mr. Tank Inspector?'" You shall have it. For several months you have been cooing

around me in the capacity of a brother subordinate official on these lines of railways. Have I enjoyed your charming company and the musical ring of your melodious voice? I thought I did, but as Scripture says: 'In much wisdom is much grief.' The wisdom I have is that you are an enemy, as it were, 'layin'' for me, and when I learned this my feelings became strangely similar to those experienced by me in an Eastern city a few years ago. The circumstances were like this: I was, without warning, smitten down with a malignant fever. It was in the sultry month of August, and I laid there on my feverish bed in what I called, when talking to the boys outside, 'my apartments on the first floor.' It *was* on the first floor (that is, below the roof, and the building was seven stories high), while 'my apartments' consisted of a small, seven-by-eight bedroom, scantily furnished and wholly destitute of all conveniences.

"It was soon reported around that the man up in the cock-loft room, No. 103, would, in all probability, die. There I lay, wholly unconscious of the gossip, and most everything else, tossing and tumbling on what seemed to be my death-bed. This went on for a full week, and, at last, just as the retreating day vanished into twilight, I heard a voice as soft and melodious and charming as your own, Mr. Harry Baine. It was wafted up to my window from the uncleanly alley below. A song, a beautiful, comforting song,—will I ever forget the words? Never, no, never! They were:

"'I am waiting, my darling, my darling, for thee,
You dear one up there in one hundred and three.'

"It was a beautiful, soothing song, and perhaps won me back to life; but permit me to inform you, sir, that it came near costing the singer his life when I learned it was a greedy undertaker who had been doing the singing act.

"You, sir, are on about equal footing, in my valued estimation, with the undertaker, and unless you choose to make such explanations as are satisfactory to me, Edward Willets, Esq., you cannot and shall not consum-

mate the burning desire of your heart by marrying my most beautiful and charming sister Emily, in whom you have already confided great confidence.

"Think not, Mr. Baine, that I am a stranger to that all-gone sensation and ceaseless yearning known as 'Love.' I can truly voice the words of the poet Hogg, who undoubtedly was the greatest poetical swine of his time, where he said :

"'For me, I'm woman's slave confessed,
Without her hopeless and unblest.'"

As the Inimitable thus poetically concluded his remarks, he sank back into a chair and wiped and rewiped his flushed face.

Harry sat staring at nothing in particular, but everything inside the small operator's room in general, for several moments.

Finally he said : "Mr. Willets, I do not believe you are guilty of any crime, and I told 'Rilla Tobias that——"

"Charming, charming Cinderilla," interrupted Willets.

"That," continued Harry, "I would do all in my power to prove you innocent.

"My father does not——"

"Stephen Baine," again interrupted Willets.

"Yes," said Harry, "Stephen Baine, my father, does not believe you guilty of taking his money, but——"

"Hold on there," said Willets, rising to his feet and again bringing his big-jointed finger into action. "Do I, sir, understand you to say that I am suspected of stealing Stephen Baine's money?"

"Exactly," replied Harry.

"Exactly, the devil!" ejaculated Willets, scratching his head. "I supposed that I was wholly exonerated from that charge months ago. If I wasn't, why, I ask, why in the name of the Virgin Mary was I released from the Hampton bastile (and, by the way, it is a miserable, one-horse institution), and reinstated in my old job."

Harry saw that he had gone just far enough to make

it necessary for him to go all the way, and believing, as he did, that Willets was innocent of all knowledge connected with the affair, he did not hesitate, but in a confidential manner told the Inimitable all, and concluded by saying: "I may as well make a clean breast of it, and tell you that my life will indeed be most complete if I succeed in gaining your sister's hand. I have not said this yet to her in words, but she certainly has read the truth stamped on every lineament and feature of my face, and unless I am miserably blinded, she reciprocates my own deep feelings. I would now like to know, Mr. Willets, how you came into possession of such a fund of knowledge concerning myself?"

"My charming friend," said the Inimitable, "there is my hand and my promise of everlasting friendship. My knowledge, sir, concerning yourself was obtained through two different sources. 'Rilla Tobias, the noble woman who stimulates my every act, and who one day I hope to call my wife, sent me your picture and praised you up considerably. I received that picture, sir, before I ever saw you, yet I failed to recognize your face when you came to Hampton. My sister Emily sent me the photo you gave her, but requested that I return it by first mail, which I did, and that was only day before yesterday. She knows you as Harry Gibbs, and it was not until I got her letter that I thought of the photo I already had, and when I compared them I found they were from the same print. Then my eyes began to open, and when I received this letter from Richard Tobias, Rilla's brother, —oh! you need not look so deucedly surprised; my charming fellow, you may never have heard of it, but still she has a brother for all of that. When I received this letter, as I before observed, and learned that you were driving all over Cinapolis hunting for Mr. T. Richards, then I knew you had been following my friend Richard home, and prying around after him like a sneaking hungry wolf. Please, sir, excuse the comparison."

"Have you no idea," asked Harry earnestly, "where that old satchel which contained my father's money went to?"

"You will excuse my frankness," the Inimitable replied, "but I have always doubted, and doubted seriously that fourteen thousand dollar story. In short, my friend, until a month ago I firmly believed that the story of the old gentleman, losing any money at all was a monster fish story ; but during the last month I have, as it were, experienced a change of heart. There is an old adage," continued Willets, "'that a fool never changes his mind, while a wise man does.' Now, in sublime imitation of that wise saying, I can truthfully say, that I do believe he lost his money in this very depot, and I am abundantly supplied with reasons for the faith that is within me."

The two then fell into an earnest conversation, and finally agreed to keep their understanding a secret. No one was to know, not even Burt Lester, of this compact of friendship between Edward Willets and Harry Baine. It might be well to say here that the Inimitable was very loath to believe the theory that Lin Brinkerhoff knew anything about the theft, but strenuously insisted that old Hinchey, the old villain from whom Richard and little Penfield Pembrooke had fled, was most likely the guilty one, and, in fact, this was Richard's theory.

"Hold on a moment," said Harry as he took a bunch of letters from his pocket, and while he glanced them over, asked, "do you know a man by the name of C. McGuffin ?"

"McGuffin, McGuffin ?" repeated Willets, in a thoughtful manner. "No, sir, I believe not."

"He is the chap," said Harry, "that little Penfield Pembrooke was bound out to, when he first left Hampton."

"Oh, yes, I remember," said Willets. "I accompanied the lad five miles out on the stage, the morning he left."

"And gave him twenty dollars," said Harry.

"Who told you that ?" Willets quickly asked.

"'Rilla Tobias' uncle. Oh, you need not look so deucedly surprised, as you said to me a while ago. You may never have heard that she had an uncle, but she has,

nevertheless. His name is George Tobias, and he lives with this C. McGuffin."

"Ah! what is this?" said Harry, while a startled expression overspread his handsome features. The occasion of this remark and startled look was a letter which he had come across in the bunch of pilfered mail, which he had by stratagem taken from the Phenomenal McGuffin's pockets.

"You do not believe that the boy is guilty?" said Harry, assuming an indifferent manner, just as if he had made no discovery.

Willets had settled down—that is, he had at last seated himself at his accustomed place, and elevated his big ungainly feet to their accustomed rack, and dropped his long bony arms over the side of his chair in his usual manner. His arms were just long enough so that either hand rested partially on the floor.

When Harry propounded this question, Willets said in a very weak voice, "My honored friend, if I was as sure of my breakfast as I am of Lin Brinkerhoff's innocence, I would really feel more natural than I do at the present moment; that is, less worried. It is quite annoying to have that all-gone sensation meekly, yet surely, come creeping into your stomach about this time in the morning, and have a dyspeptic landlord, whom you have always honored for his veracity, assure you on his word of honor that unless certain pecuniary matters are satisfactorily adjusted by this morning, prior to the pouring of the coffee, why, no coffee could be poured."

"What do you mean, Mr. Willets?" asked Harry, in some surprise.

"I mean, my charming friend," replied the Inimitable Willets, "that I am rapidly approaching that place on life's highway that is beset with driftwood, over which my weary feet will stumble, and thorns of financial disaster that will sorely prick my tender flesh. You, perhaps, sir, are familiar with that renowned philosopher's (Emerson) writings. In one place he says: 'The world is yours, take anything you choose, but remember you must pay for it.' Now, I have been taking, or rather partaking, quite freely of hot beefsteaks, saddles of mut-

ton, roast loins of pork, and other savory dishes that can always be found on my landlord's table—that is, be found there before I commence the consumption thereof, —after I am through it usually looks very boneyardy in the immediate vicinity where I have been actively holding forth. Thus, you see I have been freely helping myself to anything and everything I desired, or that the stomach of mortal could wish for, but have not, as yet, paid the price."

As the Inimitable concluded his explanation, his head sank low on his breast, and a quiver of remorse and utter hopelessness seemed to shake his lengthy frame with a convulsed shudder.

"If," said Harry, "you are in need of any moneyed accommodation, permit me, Mr. Willets, to insist that you look no further, for it will afford me real pleasure to be the humble instrument that can remove the driftwood from your path, and the thorn of adversity from your side. I have plenty of spare cash. How much would you like?"

Willets's feet came down from the table, and his hands came up from the floor, and straightening himself up, he said in a half-disbelieving tone, "Don't mock me, my charming friend, the board bill is larger than you have any idea of, and surely you do not mean that you will loan me the money to liquidate the indebtedness? No, no, it is too good news to be true."

"But I do mean it," remonstrated Harry earnestly, "and I mean every word of it. Now, tell me how much the bill is. Is it more than a hundred dollars?"

"A hundred dollars?" said Willets, as he came to his feet again, "no, indeed, I don't run bills to that enormous amount, my charming fellow. Here is the bill."

Harry Baine took the crumpled piece of paper on which the landlord had written out the account, and unfolding it, read aloud: "Your board bill must be paid at once. I will no longer put up with your trifling promises. You owe me a balance of ninety-nine dollars and ninety-five cents, which must be paid before you eat another meal at my table."

"I told you," interrupted Willets, "that it had not as

yet reached the fabulous sum of one hundred dollars. I received this not over-courteous note from my landlord last evening after supper. The last clause, sir, is what winds me up. It, sir, is the crusher. Not another meal shall I have until the bill is paid."

"You have no money, I suppose," said Harry, as he drew out his purse.

"I certainly have," replied Willets, tartly, "I never yet was broke,—that is, for a greater period than three or four months at a time."

"How much have you ?" asked Harry rather sternly.

"A dollar," replied Willets, promptly, "that is, I did have a dollar before I broke it. Let me see ; I bought a tooth-brush for a quarter, shaving soap ten cents, a couple of linen collars for thirty-five cents, and a quarter's worth of cigars ; and, by-the way, I have a couple of those cigars left, and I insist that you join me in a social smoke." As he said this he reached Harry a cigar, at the same time biting the tip-end of another one preparatory to lighting.

Harry lit the cigar impatiently, and then said: "Twenty-five cents, ten cents, thirty-five cents, and twenty-five cents makes about ninety-five cents that you spent, and hence have the enormous sum of five cents left."

"More than that left, isn't there ?" observed Willets, as he quietly went on lighting his cigar.

"Well, we will soon see," he continued, "how much capital, surplus and undivided profits are in the treasury." As he said this he thrust his long, bony hand into his pocket and fished up a withered-looking purse, and observed as he did so that it looked deucedly like something an elephant had stepped on. He opened the purse and turned it upside down on the table, with a great flourish, and a solitary nickel fell out. The Inimitable looked slightly disappointed, and holding up the purse, looked carefully through it, as if he suspected there was more to follow the pioneer nickel. After satisfying himself that a five-cent piece was beyond a doubt the extent of his earthly possessions, he drew a long breath and said with great suavity : "My charming friend, there is

a five-cent piece. You will observe that it is genuine. No lead nickel is ever played off on me. You will also observe this piece of coin is not in any way mutilated. No, sir, it is a valuable piece of money, and worth every cent it claims to be."

During all this time Harry sat smoking his cigar in silence, and even seemed to enjoy the Inimitable's queer performance.

When Willets ceased speaking, Harry pushed toward him the roll of bills he had received from McGuffin for telling his fortune, saying: "There is one hundred dollars."

"A hundred dollars," said Willets, "that is really more than I need, my charming friend. Let me see, the bill is ninety-nine dollars and ninety-five cents. I have a nickel, so that would leave ninety-nine dollars and ninety cents that I need to borrow of you. My dear sir," he went on, "I have no change, and in this roll of bills you have given me are ten cents more than I need, but I will remember that I owe you ten cents and will pay it back some time, if I live long enough."

"You mean," said Harry, "that you owe me a hundred dollars."

"So it is, certainly, sir," replied Willets, glowingly. "A hundred dollars instead of ten cents; a slight difference, but it shall be paid; remember that, sir, it shall be paid. Sir, you can have no adequate conception of the rasping exasperations of my feelings that I suffered when I confessed to you the deplorable condition of my finances. True, I wasn't broke, but I was deucedly close to the dead line. To be candid, I was in a devil of a short run, and I could not have looked bluer than I felt, had I been soaked for a fortnight in a caldron of indigo water. In short, my faith and hope in the doctrine of 'self-reliance,' was fast slipping and slipping away from my grasp. Permit me, my charming Mr. Baine, to pause here and ask the question, 'What is faith? What is hope?' We are biblically told by the Apostle Paul that 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' We are also informed by the same undoubted authority that hope is a sort of a combination

or pool between desire and expectation. Now, my dear Mr. Baine, these definitions may satisfy the average mind, but my mind is not an average one. No, I don't mean that—I mean to say that my thirsting soul craves for a poetical definition, and the illustrious Kent, that poetical genius of his day, has indeed most beautifully given such a definition in the following words:

"Faith is the star that gleams above
Hope is the flower that buds below;
Twin tokens of celestial love
That out from nature's bosom grow."

"Ah, those are soul-touching words, they are indeed." Here Willets paused and consulted his watch, and saw that it was almost breakfast time. "It was my intention," he then observed, "to make a desperate effort to thank you in appropriate words and manner for the loan of this hundred dollars, but for some cause I am unable to express myself with that fluency which usually characterizes my ordinary conversation. Therefore——"

"Friend Willets," interrupted Harry, "let me entreat you to say not a word or utter not a syllable of thanks for this trivial accommodation. You can pay me back as soon as you get around to it, and that is all there is of it. I notice that you have a very poor delivery this morning, and am looking every minute for a stoppage in your speech." As Harry said this, a merry twinkle came into his eyes.

"In conclusion, then," said Willets, wholly unmindful of Harry's irony, "I will say that I am under lasting obligations to you. How long they will last remains to be seen, but my greatest wish shall ever be that the great God of the universe, who doeth all things well, will in his goodness spare your life to see the day that I return you this money; for, as I before observed, it shall be paid, sir, it shall be paid."

Many years afterward Harry Baine had a better understanding of Willets' words than he did the morning they were spoken.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DETECTIVES VISIT THE MCGUFFIN FARM.

THERE are dim, shadowy phantoms that at times gather and congregate about our couches during the hours of sleep.

One seems to be smiling and happy, and the thoughts it suggests are soothing and restful; while another phantom is as dark and black as midnight itself. Its irregular and distorted features are the very semblance of debauch, dissipation and revelry.

It brings in its wake a host of distressing, fretful dreams.

One moment, we are standing on the narrow, overhanging rocks of some deep, black, yawning chasm. Of a sudden, our very weight breaks off the ledge, and instead of at once sliding over into the mouth of the bottomless pit, we catch at some other crag for support, then lose our footing again and stumble; then again cling to some projecting spur of rock, and all the time the ghastly, grinning and distorted features of this black-winged phantom hovers near, yet ever just beyond our reach, and mockingly chuckles at our wearying struggle.

Thus the night wears away, and when morning comes we feel as tired and exhausted as we were when we lay down the night before.

This was the case with Burt Lester, the detective, on a certain morning some two weeks after Harry Baine's return to Hampton.

It was on the particular morning of the day set apart by these two "shadows" to visit C. McGuffin, Esq., at his farm, as had been arranged by Harry while playing the role of political editor of *The Herald*, the leading party paper of the state.

Breakfast was over, and our two detective friends were seated on the back porch of the hotel, enjoying their Havanas, and waiting for the sands of another hour

to run, for then the stage coach would arrive, going toward the Mills.

"Let me see that letter again," said Burt, looking up at Harry.

Without making any reply, Harry Baine drew from his pocket, a bunch of old letters, and selected one written in a feminine hand, which he reached to his companion. It read as follows:

"HAMPTON, March 17th, 18—.

"C. McGuffin, Esq.:

"Dear Sir:—My brother says your offer to give a mortgage is satisfactory. You can meet me at the station Tuesday next and we will go to my uncle's, who is an attorney, to have the papers drawn up. My uncle lives at Milford, a village near Jacksontown. Please destroy this letter as soon as you have read it.

"Yours respectfully,

———— ————

"Well," said Burt, half to himself, "while the name has been torn off, yet I know well enough who has an uncle at Milford—have studied law under him."

"A mortgage, eh? Well we will go to-day and see what can be done toward stealing C. McGuffin's pedigree, as Harry calls it."

They started soon after this, and walked out on the highway that led toward the Mills, and waited in a woody place, for the lumbering old stage to come along.

They did this to prevent the village loafers from having anything concerning themselves to gossip about.

Harry was dressed in a plain business suit, just as he was on the morning he met McGuffin at "The Arlington," in Cinapolis, while Burt still wore his dignified, English swell eye-glass make-up.

They had gained the high road at a place where huge trees skirted it along on either side. The woods were full of bursting buds, johnnie-jump-ups, and other early flowers, all laughingly nodding their heads to the passing morning breeze, while nature's carpet of living

verdure was matting itself, thicker and thicker as the days wore on.

They seated themselves by the road side on a fallen tree to enjoy this fresh and beautiful April morning, and to feast their eyes on the wondrous works of Him who caused the grasses to grow, the flowers to bloom, and planted the lily of the field, and likened it to true life.

"I tell you, Harry, this is resting, to look around and see these sights. This is Spring time, and how eager I was, when a boy, to lay aside my shoes and stockings and run frisking about on the turfy green, like a gambolling lamb in the sunshine."

"Yes," replied Harry, "all our boyish pranks and boyish ambitions come back to us when surrounded with such cheering sights as these. I have often thought," he continued, "that the Spring time must be strangely interesting to the very old, for it is like a milestone on which they can chronicle another time, on life's journey, that they have seen the mother earth wake from its frozen stupor and bud into living life. I do wonder, Burt, if there is any one whose finer feelings are so blunted by the evils of this age to be unmoved by the pleasures of a ramble through leafy woods?"

"I hope not," Burt replied, "for a man must surely be about lost, if his heart does not thrill a little when surrounded, as we are now in the solitude of the deep wild wood, by growing herbage, blooming flowers, bursting buds, and listening to the barking, chirping squirrels and the twitter of the happy birds; and then the ceaseless song of that rivulet, over there, whose waters are making such restful music as they hurry over those pebbly rocks."

"Hush! who is this coming?" said Harry.

They leaned forward and discovered a tall individual coming toward them. "It is that confounded Willets, it is, by heavens," replied Burt, in a suppressed voice.

By this time he was almost to them, and wore the joyful, happy expression so common with him.

"Ah, gentlemen, good morning to you. I see you, like myself, can not forebear an occasional ramble in

the deep woods, where you can with your tender, loving and poetic thoughts commune with nature. Pardon me, gentlemen, but I can not adequately, and with that fluency which I fain would command, express to you the pleasure I take in my rambles here, with the squirrels and birds for companions, and, when evening time comes on, the hum of winged insects. True they are wild, yet gentle, companions, and they add a pleasure to my strolls which only the Poet can explain. Gentlemen, I cannot express to you the deep, pathetic feelings that take possession of me, and, as it were, twine about my very heart when I am alone with nature. But, I doubt not that it helps me in my weak way to appreciate the inexpressible feelings that must have drenched, as it were, Byron's very soul, when he said :

'I love not man the less, but nature more.'

"Ah, sirs, it is truly remarkable what a delightful sensation prevades our whole system when rambling among the growing foliage and the laughing, giggling flowers that kiss alike the morning and evening breeze, the tall trees, the leafy boughs, the twining grape vines, and—"

"Look there, by Ned," said Willets, abruptly breaking into his own speech, "there comes the stage. Now, who would have thought that it was no later than that?"

"We are going away for a short trip," said Harry, as he gave Willets a knowing look.

Willets stared at Burt a moment, and then said, without a smile or a single ray of intelligence lighting up his sandy face, "Biblically speaking, gentlemen, permit me to observe, 'Behold, the man clothed with linen, which had the ink-horn by his side, reported the matter.'"

As he said this, he turned and walked away into the woods.

The old stage came slowly along. Harry hailed the driver, and soon they were seated within and wheeled along toward McGuffin's.

Several miles were passed when Burt finally broke

the silence by saying, "I had a devil of a dream last night, Harry."

"A dream?" said Harry, as he looked smilingly around on his companion.

"Yes," replied Burt, thoughtfully, "a dream, and it haunts me unmercifully, although I scorn to think of putting any faith in dreams."

"Pray, tell me," said Harry, "this remarkable dream of yours?"

"Oh, it is not so remarkable that I know of," replied Burt, "only it kept me on the rack and wearied me more than all the sleep I got refreshed me."

"I dreamed," continued Burt in a slow, thoughtful way, "that I was standing on the very edge of a rocky cliff, and a phantom devil, of the most hideous kind and shape, approached me. He was as black as darkness, and wore a frightful grin which parted his lips and exposed two great fangs of tushes. His eyes were small and restless, and his distorted features seemed to say, 'You are in my power and I mean to hurl you down this ragged cliff to the surging, turbulent waters below.' Nearer, and nearer still, he came, yet spoke not a word, but kept crowding me closer to the cliff's edge. Finally, the ledge of rock on which I stood broke, and slipping from under my feet went thundering down, and with a terrible splash sank in the waters below. Instead of falling with it, I caught another projecting ledge, and again found footing. Right over me hovered that horrid phantom imp, exulting at my great danger and seeming miraculous escape. While I was still looking above me at this horrible figure, I felt the rock giving away from beneath my feet, and only by the greatest effort did I keep from falling with this second ledge that went tumbling into the waters. Thus, it seemed, for hours I was kept on the rack of torture, until my hands and feet were lacerated and bleeding, and still that horrid face gleamed and grinned in mocking torture just above me.

"Presently, I saw your face and another's look over the edge of the rocky crag, which was now far above. Then you lowered a rope. Just as I let go my hold on the sharp and cutting rocks to reach this kindly help, that

accursed phantom snatched it away, and I fell down, down to the waters below. Instead of being dashed to pieces, I was seemingly revived. A friendly piece of some wrecked vessel floated near, and after much effort I reached and dragged my almost exhausted body on top of it. Then I raised my head and looked upward in the hope of seeing you, but instead I saw that horrid, black and loathsome devil hovering over me, and his debauched features were convulsed with mocking laughter. I was soon floated far out in the billowy sea, and discovered that it was thickly strewn with ghastly, bloated, upturned faces of the floating dead. Then, of a sudden, I saw on the wide waste of turbulent waters a snowy sail coming swiftly toward me, and as it drew near, Kittie Pembrooke leaned over the vessel's side, and reached her fair, slender hands to lift me up. Her long, dark, wavy hair flowed about her fair shoulders unrestrained.

"Her warm arms were about me, and already her panting breath fanned my cheeks when that hideous, strong-armed devil of darkness struck her arms down, and engulfed the white-sailed craft into the roaring sea, and then bore Kittie Pembrooke away in his arms, she struggling to free herself, while the evil one laughed a hollow, triumphant laugh. Just then there came a legion of white-robed angels, and they were playing on harps of gold and singing anthems of praise. They surrounded the black, retreating form that was bearing Kittie away, and struck him down into the mad waters among the drifting dead, and Kittie was borne in their arms, where she laid contentedly.

"As they came near to where I was floating, she looked pleadingly into the angelic faces about her, and reached her snowy arms toward me. Then a halo of light shone about me so brightly that I was blinded. The rigid, drifting corpses were no longer discernible. I was borne to an emerald palace, where precious stones paved the checkered floor, and where the sweet-scented odors of a thousand varieties of flowers ladened the air. There, Harry, that is my dream. Now don't laugh at me for telling it."

"No, Burt," replied Harry, half jesting, half in earnest, "no, I will not laugh at you, but when I see my cousin Kittie I will tell her that you are hopelessly in the meshes of Cupid's netted wilderness, and that she is, without a question, the one to help you in this, your first attack."

They both laughed heartily at Harry's words, little dreaming that a prophecy had been uttered in Burt Lester's strange dream.

When the Mills were finally reached, the sun was well down the western sky.

They had talked the matter over, and concluded to remain over night at the Mills and to drive out to the Phenomenal's early the next morning; but fate willed it otherwise.

They had no sooner alighted from the coach than a dressed-up sort of an old rough-and-ready, corpulent-looking farmer came forward and said in a loud, familiar voice:

"Hello, Gibbs, my dear sir, hello. Glad to see you, by thunder, I be."

While he was saying this, he took Harry by the hand and almost wrung it off.

As soon as their greeting was over, Harry very formally presented to C. McGuffin, Esq., of the Second District, the Honorable Mr. Hamlin, owner and proprietor of *The Herald.*

"Glad to see you, Mr. Hamlin," said McGuffin, in a stammering way—embarrassed, yet determined that these city chaps should not detect it.

"Drive down here!" shouted McGuffin, at the top of his voice, to his teamster or coachman, who sat on top of the box, holding a spirited span of dapple grays.

The driver thus addressed drove across the open ground that lay between the village post-office and the hotel building. As the horses drew up, our detective friends saw that C. McGuffin had lately, very lately, provided himself with a family barouche. Yes, it was bran new, as was also the silver-plated harness. The driver and Harry exchanged a look of recognition, but not a

word was spoken. It will be remembered that they had met before, when Tobs visited Dairyfield Farm.

It was a very pleasant afternoon, and by this time the sun was casting very long shadows. McGuffin stepped forward when the barouche was driven up and let down the cover, exposing to view the rich upholstering within. After this was done, the reporting political editor, who had an "ink-horn by his side," and the very dignified, English-looking gentleman were invited to take seats within. McGuffin followed them, and ordered Tobs, his coachman, to drive down across the iron bridge and back, saying: "By that time the mail will be distributed."

Accordingly, the spirited team was headed toward the iron bridge.

McGuffin, by way of opening up the conversation, produced a handful of cigars and provided lights.

"These," observed Harry, "are the same brand of cigars you so handsomely treated me to when in the city?"

"Yes, same thing," replied McGuffin, while he proceeded to light a cigar for himself; "you see," he went on, "they were such devilish good cigars that I just wrote down and ordered them to send me up five hundred, so I would be prepared like for the campaign, this coming summer and fall. When these run out we will get more." As he said this he laughed a coarse, pompous laugh, as much as to say, "I have plenty of the shiners, and don't you forget it."

The distinguished Mr. Hamlin observed that the barouche was a very elegant one, and inquired if it was not built after the latest style.

"You bet your life it is," replied the Phenomenal; "I ordered this when I was in the city last, and just got it home a few days ago."

The iron bridge by this time was reached, and the old Mill, from whence the village derived its name, was just above, with its long dam stretching across from the Mill to the opposite bank.

Over the whole length of the mill-dam the shimmer-

ing waters fell in one long unbroken line, with a steady, unchanging roar.

"Undoubtedly," observed Harry, "that is a fine water power."

"Fine!" said McGuffin; "why there is not such another water-power on the whole river. You see," he went on, "this dam is at the foot of the five-mile rapids. I have had my eye on that piece of property for the past twelve years, and when the time was ripe I was in readiness and picked the fruit."

"I do not quite understand you," observed the distinguished Mr. Hamlin, looking through his eye-glass at the Phenomenal.

"Don't eh?" replied McGuffin, with a very knowing look. "Why I mean this, by the time being ripe. The Gilford boys, who owned the Mill, got behind and had to borrow money, and as I had money to loan they came to me, and, by thunder, they had to pay such interest as I saw fit to charge, you bet your life they did. Thus matters have went on for the last three years; and interest, you know," said McGuffin, with a heartless chuckle, "is a cancer that eats continually, day and night and Sundays, too, and its pangs of hunger are never satisfied. After three years of good faithful eating in this constant, unceasing way, it mellowed them, and they got ripe and willing to sell, even anxious to sell me the old mill property that three years ago they insultingly told me I didn't have money enough to buy. I bought it, just the other day, for about one-half what it is really worth, and have already let the contract to have it refitted throughout with patent rollers and all the other late improvements put in."

Thus they conversed until the post-office was again reached.

Old Tim Mannahan was on the lookout, and as the dappled grays drew up before his door, he hastened down the old time worn steps with the Phenomenal McGuffin's mail, and then, without attracting any notice, reached Tobs a letter.

"Here is yer mail, papers and lethers," old Tim remarked, as he handed it in, "and sure Mr. McGuffin

your eyes will be after being good and sore when ye's read all that. Here, Mr. McGuffin," said old Tim, reaching up a piece of money, "is that quarther of a dollar I have been afther owin' ye's for a fortnight past, sure."

"That's all right, Tim," said the Phenomenal, as he thrust the coin in his pocket with a flourish, and called out to Tobs to drive on.

"Tim!" observed the distinguished Hamlin, "what an old name. Tim, Tim,—now what is that old chap's name, anyway?"

"Tim Mannahan," replied McGuffin, as he folded up his mail and stowed it away in his pocket.

It was well that McGuffin had something to divert his attention, for if he had been looking at Burt Lester when he mentioned the old postmaster's name, he would have seen the color go and come out of that distinguished looking gentleman's face so rapidly that he certainly would have suspected something was wrong. Harry Baine's quick eye discovered that some startling revelation had been made, by the confusion that Burt manifested. But his startled and confused manner was only of a moment's duration, and then he was himself again.

The journey to McGuffin's was finally over, and our two friends were conducted into the large and very poorly furnished house.

There was one exception, however; the parlor bedroom was indeed richly furnished with an expensive carved bedroom set complete. Divan, chairs and brussels carpet to match. The room was a large one, and in the center hung an elegant chandelier with four lamps, plenty large enough for his parlor, but the parlor had no chandelier of any kind. Two windows opened from this room, one on to a veranda and the other overlooked a large beautiful yard that stretched away from the house to the eastward. True, this yard, like the stately house, bore the impress of neglect indelibly stamped on every hand.

The detectives were escorted to this room immediately, and told by the Phenomenal that supper would be

ready as soon as they were ready for it. "Here you will find water and towels with which to wash. My house, gentlemen," he went on, "is not furnished. We don't pretend to be a livin' here yet, only a staying."

"Why, I am sure," said Harry, "this room is elegantly furnished."

"This room," replied McGuffin, bluntly, "is not the house. So far as this bedroom is concerned it is what C. McGuffin calls a furnished room. I do nothing by halves, by thunder I don't, and you can bet your lives if I run for Congress it will be done thorough; no half-way work in mine." At this McGuffin looked wise and laughed a short "hoff-goff" chuckle, and slapped his pocket in his pompous way.

The two detectives joined in complimenting the Phenomenal on the appropriateness of the remark, and the pleased look he wore when he took himself away, convinced them that they had rubbed the hair in the right direction.

"Well, isn't he a trump?" said Harry, softly.

"Yes," replied Burt, in almost a whisper, "but there is a wicked, unscrupulous gleam in the old chap's eye that I don't relish."

"Oh, that is your fancy," said Harry, jokingly, "perhaps you imagine he is the black phantom you saw in your dream. By-the-way, Burt, what in the world was the matter with you when we left the post-office? I thought for a moment that you were going to have an ague shake."

"Not so loud, Harry, my boy. You must be more cautious. I will tell you after supper all about what agitated me so, and if your eyes don't open, then I am mistaken. There goes the bell—I presume it is supper, but I could not eat a morsel to save my life. I will lay down here on this divan and play sick, and it will not be hard work to play it to-night, for I do feel miserable. Tell them that I am dyspeptic and subject to spells, and that I have a spell to-night."

"This is bad luck," said Harry, "you do look well-nigh used up, Burt, but would not a good cup of coffee help you?"

"No, nothing will help me but rest. Here comes McGuffin now."

"Supper is ready, gentlemen," said the Phenomenal, as he appeared in the doorway.

Harry briefly explained to him his companion's dyspeptic inclinations, and of his suddenly taking ill, and as he did so dampened his handkerchief with cold water and laid it carefully on Burt's forehead.

"Well, that's devilish bad luck, it is, by thunder," said McGuffin, in as sympathizing a tone as he could command.

On the way out to the supper table McGuffin, by way of explanation, said to Harry that, unexpectedly, a brother of his had come that afternoon, who was not a very prepossessing sort of an individual.

The facts were: Old Hinchey had shown up at the McGuffin farm that very afternoon, much to the Phenomenal's annoyance. What his object was for coming can be told in a few words. It will be remembered that McGuffin had consented to pay the old 'Possum ten thousand dollars to put Tobs and little Penfield Pembrooke out of the way, and Hinchey concluded he would come and do the job so far as Tobs was concerned, and get half the price agreed on. That much he wished to make sure of, for he feared his wealthy brother might change his mind, especially if anything happened that he did not run for Congress.

Why McGuffin recognized and introduced old Hinchey as his brother was simply because the old 'Possum had insisted that it should be that way.

Harry was introduced to Mrs. McGuffin and Henry McGuffin.

"And this gentleman," said Harry, pointing to Tobs, who stood near by, "you have not introduced me to him."

"Oh, that is Tobs, my coachman," replied McGuffin, hastily. "Take this seat, Mr. Gibbs."

Harry would have liked very much to have been introduced to Tobs, so that he could have had an excuse to give him a friendly shake.

The letter, which old Tim cautiously slipped Tobs,

was from Harry, and it explained enough, so that he knew there was something in the wind. "Something usually his hin the wind, you know," mused Tobs to himself, "when you see so deuced many bloody buzzards about."

CHAPTER XXII.

A MIDNIGHT VISIT TO THE CLIFF.

THAT evening, when Harry Baine had finished his supper and returned to "the furnished room," as his lordship, the Phenomenal, called it, he carefully closed and fastened the door.

Burt Lester was uneasily walking the room when he returned, but soon after drew a chair close beside the divan where Harry Baine had thrown himself, after lighting one of McGuffin's twenty-five cent cigars.

Burt then commenced in a low, hushed voice, and spoke as follows :

"You wondered, old boy, what it was that excited me so this evening. I will tell you the story, and then you will understand.

"A good many years ago there lived in Warwickshire, England, near the grand old ruins of Kenilworth, an Irish gentleman of great wealth, by the name of Patrick Mannahan. When a young man he married an Englishwoman, the youngest child of a very wealthy, aristocratic family. He was poor when he married her, and without expectations, but death commenced its remorseless work and kept it up until Patrick Mannahan's wife was the only living representative of the once rich and proud family of Barretsons. Hence this Irishman, Patrick Mannahan, through his wife came into possession of the Barretson estate, but not, however, without some trouble occasioned by a would-be disputing claimant, a young man, who bore the Barretson name, and who was a cousin of Mrs. Mannahan.

"It was finally decided by the courts in Mrs. Mannahan's favor. It provided, however, that if Mrs. Mannahan should die without male issue or male representative, then this would-be claimant and cousin, should, by the chancery decree, be the heir to Barret Hall.

"This Irish gentleman and his English bride lived happily together for many years. Four children were born to them—two sons and two daughters. The oldest son bore the name Barretson Mannahan, and the second son the name of Timothy Mannahan.

"The daughters' names were respectively Emily and Alice, the former of whom was at least ten or a dozen years older than Alice, the youngest child.

"Timothy Mannahan and his sister, Emily, came to America over thirty years ago, and soon after reaching this country they became estranged, because of her marrying a man whom her brother disliked with the stinging bitterness of hate.

"The younger sister, Alice, soon after her parents' death married a man by the name of Daniel Lester, and is, therefore, my own mother, and Timothy Mannahan is my uncle."

"Do you think," said Harry, greatly agitated, "that——"

"Yes," interrupted Burt, "I do think that this old postmaster is my lost uncle. But let me go on with my story. After my mother's marriage, she and my father emigrated to Ireland, where in younger days her father had lived, and where a number of his relatives still resided. About fifteen years ago, while I was a mere lad, my uncle, Barretson Mannahan, who never had been married, died, and of course my uncle, Timothy, would naturally succeed him, could he be found.

"Harlan Barretson, who had, when a young man, disputed my mother's claim, appeared on the scene and produced affidavits and such proof as satisfied the court that my uncle, Timothy Manahan, was dead and had been for a number of years. He, therefore, in due time, was declared the heir according to the decision of the court years before.

"Ten years ago my father emigrated to America and

found a home in Cinapolis. Although I was still quite young, I succeeded at last in connecting myself with the Pinkerton Detective Agency, and was successful in making myself useful, and, if I do say it, proved myself a valuable man.

"My object was to find my uncle, Timothy Mannahad, for my mother believed firmly, and does to this day, that he is still alive. If I have asked the question, 'Do you know any one by the name of Timothy Mannahan?' once, I know that I have asked it a thousand times.

"My operations since then have carried me not only all over the United States, but also over England and most of the European continent, but never before have I felt that success was about to crown my long search."

"Could you not," asked Harry, "have found out something from your mother's sister, Emily, who, you say, resided in New York?"

"That," replied Burt, "is just where the first missing link occurred. My Uncle Timothy never mentioned her husband's name in any of his letters. He only said that Emily had married a man who was a Wall Street gambler and that he had disowned her as a sister, and was trying to forget her. Hence you can see, Harry, unless I can find my Uncle Timothy, I can never hope to learn who my Aunt Emily married."

"But you believe," said Harry, encouragingly, "that you have at last found your uncle, Timothy Mannahan?"

"Yes," replied Burt, at last, at last—and God grant that I am not mistaken."

"Amen!" responded Harry, earnestly.

"Now I have something to tell you, Burt, old fellow, and after I am through, then we can get down to some definite plan of operation."

The two commenced a whispered conversation, but suddenly stopped to listen to some moving noise in the large unfurnished appartment into which their room opened.

For a moment all was silent, then a shuffling sound, as if some one was walking stealthily across the uncarpeted floor, was heard.

"The door is securely locked, is it not?" whispered Burt.

"Yes," was Harry's almost inaudible reply, while he strained his ears to catch the muffled sound again.

Burt arose from his chair, and motioning to his companion to follow, moved noiselessly across the carpeted floor to the window, which overlooked the broad yard. As silently as the working of a shadow on the wall, Burt lifted the lower sash clear of the window, and stepped outside, closely followed by Harry.

The sash was then replaced in a temporary manner, and the two detectives stole softly away into the darkness.

Burt directed his steps to a large pile of rails that had been unloaded in an irregular fashion, and after reconnoitering for a few moments, seated himself and bade Harry to do likewise, at the same time observing that "While eavesdroppers are straining their ears at our bedroom door, we will talk in safety here, and take a deal of comfort thinking how we outwitted them."

"Have you an easy seat?"

"Yes, as it were, as Willets would remark," replied Harry. "This confounded rail is trying hard to become more intimate with my bones than I really like."

"Sit up higher," said Burt, "on the flat surface of this large rail—there, now, I know you are easier, and can begin at the very beginning and tell me all."

Harry Baine then commenced at the time George Tobias, McGuffin's coachman, came to Dairyfield Farm on a visit, and narrated all the suspicions that Tobs entertained concerning McGuffin, and that he was only remaining with the Phenomenal with a view of finding out such facts as would enable him to recover the three thousand dollars and interest, which he firmly believed had been pilfered away from him.

"I tell you, Burt, this Englishman, Tobs, or Uncle George Tobias as I should call him, is a mighty shrewd man. I know that he would have shook me all over in a joyful greeting had I not given him a warning look. I endeavored to get the Phenomenal to give me an in-

troduction, when I went out to supper, but he wouldn't take the hint.

"While I am on the 'confession block,' if a pile of fence rails may be so termed, I will tell you something else."

Harry then went on and told Burt fully of his lengthy conversation with Willets, and of the Inimitable's convictions that an old man who was known as Hinchey was the real felon. He told him that little Penfield Pembrooke had been found, and was attending Emily Willets's school at the present time, and that the stranger who came to Hampton to see Willets was none other than 'Rilla Tobias' brother Richard, who for a number of years served in the capacity of slave to this inhuman evil spirit known as old Hinchey, and who seemingly held a power over him through the influence of liquor, but now Richard had reformed and his reformation was brought about through the prayers of little Pen Pembrooke. He also stated that a re-union had been arranged to take place at Grandfather Pembrooke's, some time in June.

Willets and his sister Emily were going, and Richard and Pen were to accompany them, but neither Grandfather Pembrooke, Kittie or 'Rilla were to know that any one but Willets and his sister were coming.

"By George, old boy," said Burt, enthusiastically, "you and I ought to be there, too, and then it would be a reunion."

"That is just what I am thinking," replied Harry, the darkness preventing Burt from seeing the crimson flush that mantled to his companion's handsome face.

"Oh, that is pleasant enough to talk about," said Burt, after a moment's silence, "but it is impossible, for we have a good many irons in the fire just now, and if we don't look mighty sharp some of them will burn."

While they were still talking, a dark figure in crawling posture moved carefully over the weedy yard, and approached from the rear the very pile of rails on which they were seated. Nearer and nearer it came, but with so much cat-like caution and stealth that the detectives were wholly unconscious that a companion was joining

them. Presently, the dark figure stood erect, and then walked boldly up to the consulting shadows, saying as he did so in a suppressed voice, "Hit's Tobs, hit's Tobs; keep still; hit's Tobs, you know."

"Well, I'll be knocked down with a feather," ejaculated Harry, after he had sufficiently recovered to speak and grasp Tobs' hand in a friendly embrace. A sober conversation was then entered into by the three. Tobs in his "Hinglish way" told them that he had accidentally discovered that the old man McGuffin's brother was none other than old Hinchey, the bandit, who was without doubt the king of heartless murderers.

Tobs declared his belief in the statement made by McGuffin that they were brothers, but assured our detective friends that mischief was brewing somewhere; for McGuffin and the old man, whoever he is, had not as yet retired, but were in the kitchen, sitting very close together and talking very low.

"You two remain here," said Burt, "and I will go and reconnoitre a little, and if they are talking about us, I will try and find out what they think of *The Herald*, the leading political paper of the Second District."

Burt crept away into the darkness, while Tobs, seating himself by Harry, waited in silence for the detective's return.

A full hour passed by and still they waited, as motionless as statues, only being able to hear the loud beating of their own hearts.

All at once Burt stood before them, as if he had suddenly sprung up out of the ground. He seated himself, and with his handkerchief wiped the great beads of perspiration that trickle down his face, and then in a half audible whisper, said: "Boys, there is fearful mischief brewing. That is old Hinchey, sure enough, and I will bet my life that McGuffin and he are brothers. They suspect us, Harry; that is, old Hinchey does, and I am satisfied we will get no 'pedigree' out of McGuffin; while as to you, Tobs, I saw five thousand dollars counted out by McGuffin, and given over to old Hinchey, which was the old villain's price for spilling your blood. They think you know too much."

This announcement almost lifted the Englishman

out of his boots, and only with the utmost effort did he keep from crying out. Every bone in his body seemed loose at the joints, he trembled so violently, while his teeth sounded like a stifled rattle box.

"Look here, Uncle George," said Harry, "this won't do; you are in safe hands with us, and you can thank your stars that Mr. Lester here was so fortunate as to learn of the impending danger."

"I want you, Tobs," said Burt, with great firmness in his suppressed voice, "to lead the way to the cliff in McGuffin's back pasture. Come on, don't waste a moment s time."

Tobs climbed silently down from his perch and glided away, closely followed by Harry and Burt.

After about fifteen minutes' rapid walking, Tobs stopped, and in a low voice said, "This is the pasture."

"Is it the pasture where the horses are kept?" questioned Burt.

"Yes, sir, hit his," replied Tobs.

"Then," said the detective, "this is the place. Their plan is this: McGuffin will call you early to-morrow morning, before sun-up, and direct you to come after the horses. Old Hinchey will be ready for a morning's walk and accompany you to this cliff. He will then ask you to show him where the place is that they call the 'Devil's Slide,' and the moment you get near enough he will hurl you over the precipice. Now, show me," continued Burt, "where that wonderful slide is."

"You hare within twenty feet hov hit now, you know," replied Tobs. "There hit his."

As he said this he pointed to a shelf rock, that seemed to be perfectly level, but the moment any considerable weight rested thereon, it would tip up and precipitate its load over into the chasm below.

Tobs explained to them that it was fully fifty feet down to the large black pool of stagnant water below.

A regular basin, of perhaps ten acres in dimensions, comprised this stagnant lake. At the farther side, a small stream ran by, but only afforded an outlet in rainy

seasons, when the waters of the lake were swollen beyond a given water mark.

Loose stones studded the course of the almost perpendicular slide, and neither man nor beast could go down that rocky descent without being terribly bruised and mangled, and in all probability killed, before reaching the waters below, and if life was not already extinct, the chances were about ninety-nine in a hundred they would be so stunned with bruises that they would strangle at once and drown.

"Over this death slide," said Burt to Tobs, "they propose to throw you. We, on the other hand, propose to thwart their wicked and murderous plans. You and Tobs go back, now, to the house, and each get to your rooms as best yon can. To-morrow morning, Tobs, you come for the horses, and try and seem pleased to have Hinchey accompany you. Rest assured you will find me here, for I will not leave the cliff until you come."

Harry remonstrated, but Burt was determined. "You tell them," said he, "in the morning, that I am still feeling poorly and want no breakfast, and thus account for my absence."

Harry removed the cartridges from his own revolver, and gave them to Burt, saying, "You might possibly need an extra round." They then shook hands warmly, and in company with Tobs, Harry stole back to his room, entering it through the window as he and Burt a few hours before had left it.

The light still burned low in one lamp of the chandelier.

Harry's first act, after fastening the window securely, was to refill the cylinder of his revolver with fresh cartridges, and then, without undressing, threw himself down on the bed to rest, but not to sleep. He could not dismiss from his mind the thought that brave Burt was in great danger.

The hours wore slowly on, and just as the first faint ray of approaching day appeared in the eastern horizon, he heard McGuffin call in a loud tone to Tobs to get up and bring the horses from the pasture.

Harry unlocked his door, and stole softly out through the large parlor, and called to Mr. McGuffin:

"Hallo! by thunder, you up already?" said the Phenomenal, approaching.

"I heard you talking," replied Harry, "and came out to say that Mr. Hamlin put in a very miserable night, indeed, but has now fallen into quite a restful sleep, and would you please not call us for breakfast until about nine o'clock. I myself," continued Harry, "have not slept a wink all night long, but now that Mr. Hamlin is resting I guess I will try and sleep awhile, providing, that is, Mr. McGuffin, it will not inconvenience you any to have our breakfast served at that hour?"

"Not a particle of trouble, Mr. Gibbs; you just take your snooze until nine, and if the children don't keep quiet around the house, why, by thunder, I'll make 'em."

"Thank you, very much," said Harry, withdrawing to his own room and locking the door. This done, he crossed over to the window and looked out just in time to see old Hinchey join Tobs, as that British descendant started across the back yard toward the pasture.

They were too far from his window for him to hear what was said, but Tobs seemingly had invited Hinchey to take a walk with him, and it no doubt cost faithful Tobs several cold shivers to thus carry out his part of the programme.

Just as they started, McGuffin came up and detained them a moment by asking some trivial question of Tobs. "It might be such a thing, Tobs," said McGuffin, in his usual loud voice, "that I will go away before you come back from the pasture. I don't say I will, but then I might, and for fear I shouldn't see you again I will say good-by." As he said this, he extended his hand, which Tobs accepted. Then Hinchey and his victim started past ureward, and the Phenomenal turned back to the house.

What, thought Harry, could have prompted McGuffin to do this? After paying a price for this faithful servant's blood, yet loath to part with him without saying farewell! Did he hear a whispering voice say, "You are not doing right?" Was it a troubled con-

science? Was it innate compassion, that prompted this leave-taking? What was it, that thus rebelled against the decision rendered by selfish ambition?

Oh, man of the world, when will you learn to respect the dictates of conscience and follow in the path your better self tells you is right? When will you cease to blunt and dull the finer feelings of your nature, the handiwork of an Allwise God? When will you cease to stifle the voice of sympathy and compassion that cries out in behalf of your brother man? When will you learn that selfishness is the germ of dishonesty, and that one dishonest act ripens you in a day for untold deeds of felony?

When will you learn that "It profiteth a man nothing though he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

When will you learn that it is "Not all of life to live nor all of death to die?" When will you learn that the

> "Love of glittering fashion and display,
> Like the canker, the moth and the rust
> Will sooner or later die and wither away
> And you will be laid with your father's dust."

McGuffin turned and looked after the villainous destroyer and the object of destruction as they moved away, then leaning his head against his hands closed his eyes as if he fain would shut out the pale spectre of that faithful servant's face, which prophetically he already could see grinning at him through the ghastly skull of a tormenting memory.

While Tobs, on the other hand, walked briskly along with his fawning companion, shrouded in a deep gloom and a fear of a horrible death.

Like phantoms his feelings crouched along the path and kept pace with his feet, and with their gaunt and bony hands tugged with a Goliath's strength at the anchor of his hope.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE DOUBLE TRAGEDY AT THE CLIFF.

A FEW minutes after McGuffin had ceased watching the retreating forms of old Hinchey and Tobs, the window-sash was again removed from the window of the bedroom occupied by Harry Baine, and cautiously he stepped out, with two small portmanteaus, which, in the gray light of early morning, he carried to the rail pile on which he had rested the night before, and with great haste secreted them. This done, he retraced his steps to the window for a moment, and then, after adjusting the sash, walked cautiously away, following the path that led to the pasture, along which he hastened until he came to the edge of some deep copsewood. Here he paused a moment, and examined the cartridges of his Colt's "navy."

Just as he started on again, he came suddenly against the tall figure of a man, with a fish-pouch thrown across his shoulder, who was just emerging from a bowery path that led through the deep underbrush.

The surprise was mutual, and the tall gentleman was the first to speak.

"Sure, now, and where could ye's be afther walkin' to so early in the mornin', I don't know?"

Harry recognized the old postmaster, Tim Mannahan, at once, and, in a low, but considerably agitated voice, said, "You are the village postmaster, are you not?"

"Sure an' I am," was Tim's curt reply, "but," he continued, "who the divil is ye's, I don't know."

"Your friend," said Harry.

"Och, an' ye'r after talkin' very smooth to old Tim, sure."

"Do you," asked Harry, "remember your sister Alice?"

Tim gave a very noticeable start when this question, so unexpected, was hurled at him, and stammered out, "Well, sure, sir, and I might be afther rememberin' her, and agin I mightn't."

"You have one brother, who is older than you," said Harry, in a knowing manner, "tell me his given name at once."

"Well, now, sure," said Tim, "I don't know why I should be afther——"

"Answer my question at once," said Harry, impatiently, "and do not dare to equivocate." As he made this stern demand he threateningly grasped the hilt of his revolver.

"Barretson Mannahan, sure," answered Tim, tremblingly, "and I was going to tell ye's all the time, I was, sure."

Harry then hurriedly told him of the danger that threatened Tobs, but told him nothing of Burt Lester's story.

They hurried on until they came near the cliff, and then approached more cautiously, but not a sound could they hear. The silence of nature was unbroken.

Harry Baine took one hasty, sweeping glance at the picturesque scenery around, the dewy grass, the leafy trees, the clinging vines, the snowy blossoms, the twittering songs of early birds, the occasional hum of wings made by some flitting thrush, the early flowers at his feet, laughing in a dewy smile, the woodlands beyond, boldly jutting down to the water's edge on the opposite side of the lake, the stately oaks that had withstood the storms of many winters and enjoyed the warm showers and bright sunshine of each succeeding summer, the undergrowth, like children of the parent forest trees, all so quiet and motionless. Not a breath of air stirring a single twig or leaf. The shimmering waters of the lake lay discernible between overhanging boughs. All these he saw at a single glance about him, but they could not remove the heavy forebodings that hung about his heart like a black pall.

They approached the slide, and cautiously looked about them.

"Faith, and look here," said old Tim, "the dew is all knocked off the grass sure. Holy Virgin protect us!"

"Is there any way by which we can get down to the water's edge?" asked Harry, in a trembling voice.

"Yes, come this way, sure, and I'll be afther taking you there."

The old postmaster seemed familiar with the by-paths, for he had a custom of frequenting this lake at early hours in the morning to gather in the fish from trout lines he had, without the Phenomenal McGuffin s knowledge, planted at different places in the lake.

A few moment's walk down a circuitous and steep descent, thickly overhung with intermingling boughs, brought them to the water's edge. Old Tim then lifted a boat from a sunken cavity near by, and launched it, stepped softly in, and motioned Harry to follow.

Old Tim proved himself a skillful oarsman, and soon the projecting cliff was turned, and there a sight met their eyes that almost drove them wild.

In the encounter at the top of a cliff, Burt on the outset received a stunning blow from old Hinchey that well-nigh blinded him. He came to his feet quickly, however, but in the darkness grappled with Tobs, instead of with the old 'Possum. This gave Hinchey an advantage, and although he was old, yet he was far from being inactive. He watched his opportunity until the contestants neared the fatal ledge of rock, and then with catlike quickness and with all his strength, rushed against them.

They fell over in a clenched embrace on the treacherous slide, and in a moment more went tumbling down, down, to the waters below. But old Hinchey had underestimated his strength, for when he pushed them over he went sprawling like an acrobat far over their heads.

Fortune seems at times to favor the wicked in their dark deeds, as it did in this case with him, for instead of falling with his unfortunate victims, he was caught in the tangle of a grape vine.

He caught hold of the vine and attempted to raise himself hand over hand, to the cliff again, but the vine commenced slipping from its entwined fastenings, and gradually lowered him down to a ledge of overhanging

rock, not more than fifteen or twenty feet from the surface of the water.

When Burt Lester and Tobs reached the water below, they were still clasped in each other's embrace. Fortunately, the late April showers had been plentiful during the preceding week, and the water was at its highest mark.

They let go their hold on one another as they fell into the deep water. Both had received some terrible gashes and bruises in the fall, but momentarily revived. Tobs caught a broken vine that was fasted to a gnarly oak growing near the very ledge of rock which old Hinchey was lowered to, while Burt swung himself upon a floating log, and then consciousness left him.

It will be remembered that old Hinchey had never before seen Burt Lester, and he was at a loss to know who the stranger was who had meddled with his business. "Though I must say," he muttered to himself, as he gazed on the stunned and half-drowning men below him, "that the young man did me good service. Perhaps, though, he had a grudge at Tobs himself."

The Phenomenal McGuffin had told the old 'Possum that Tobs could not swim a single stroke, and as soon as Hinchey discovered that the drowning man hung to a vine that was fastened to a limb within his reach, he was at once supremely happy. He forthwith loosened it, then holding to the end, he played and toyed with poor Tobs like a cat might do with a crippled mouse.

As Harry Baine and old Tim Mannahan rowed in sight of this picture, they were for a moment dumbfounded. There stood the ghastly, grinning Hinchey, toying with Tobs on the rack, looking down with fiendish delight on the ruinous work of his villainous planning.

Tobs was begging with a weak, exhausted voice for life, but had he appealed to the hearts of the gray rocks that towered up before him he would have softened them as quickly as Hinchey's.

Not a sympathetic lineament hovered on the old villain's face. Not a chord of pity was touched in his

stony heart. Surely his conscience was "seared over as with a hot iron."

The old sun just then peeped over the eastern hills and flung its searching glance of scrutiny over the landscape and fell full in old Hinchey's face. It so blinded him that he did not see the approaching boat until Tobs was caught up in Harry's strong arms, and then with the swiftness of an arrow old Tim shot the boat toward the bleeding and unconscious form of poor Burt Lester. He was quickly lifted from the floating log and laid carefully in the small craft, with his gashed and bruised head resting on Harry Baine's lap.

Then Harry and Tim at the same instant turned and looked toward the ledge of rock on which the demon Hinchey had stood only a few moments before. Had he been the evil spirit he could not have disappeared more mysteriously.

They effected a landing and carefully searched the cliff, but could find no trace of him whatever.

The boat was then re-entered and rowed to the east shore of the lake, where a low beach skirted the waters, thickly shaded by all kinds of forest trees.

Tobs' wounds were severe, and he had lost considerable blood, but, notwithstanding all this, he retained consciousness, though well nigh exhausted.

Burt lay in an unconscious state, as he did for many days after. When a landing was effected, he was gently carried ashore, and placed on a mossy plot of ground beneath the shady boughs of a large sycamore tree. Near by lay Tobs.

"Now, sure," said Tim, "ye'll be after watching 'em, and it's meself that will bring a docther," and without waiting for a reply from Harry, he darted away, and was soon lost sight of in the clustering, leafy forest.

In about half an hour, Harry heard the whir of carriage wheels. A little later old Tim returned, and as he did so, said, "Faith, and I was afther bringing a carriage, sure. It is only a step to the road, be dad. Give me a hand, now, and we will be afther carryin' the faintin' chap out."

Soon after, Burt Lester's almost lifeless form was

placed in the carriage, in Harry Baine's care, who pillowed his unfortunate companion's head on his lap. Tobs and Tim took the other seat.

The driver seemed to know where to go, and started slowly on.

In about an hour's time the carriage stopped before a very comfortable and cozy looking cottage, on the slope of a hill that overlooked the Mills. It had a little orchard stretching down in front, and a neat tasty garden on the rising ground at the back. To the left, a short distance, was a high rocky bluff, the summit of which was crowned by a huge bolder. About half way between this bluff and the cottage, stood a lone mulberry tree that was dead at the top, with, however, a few of its lower limbs ladened with shady leaves.

To the eastward, a little way along the river bottom, nestled the cottages that comprised the village known as the Mills. Beyond the village, and to the left, the iron bridge that spanned the river could be seen, and still further to the left the time-stained roof and gable of the old Mill was plainly discernible, and always, whether day or night time, the ceaseless, steady roar of falling waters over the dam could be heard.

"This lady," said Tim to Harry, after Burt had been carried in and Tobs assisted to a large easy chair, "is the Widow O'Riley. Perhaps you might have heard of her, and while she may blush when I say it, yet, bedad, it's afther being the truth that she is the foinest lady in the state, and sure she will nurse the lad back to loife, if it can be done by living man. Now I have got to go and be afther opening up the post-office, but sure an' I'll see you again this evening. The Missus," continued Tim, turning to Widow O'Riley, "will take good care that neither of the three are after goin' out o' door the livelong day?"

"Och, Tim," replied Mrs. O'Riley, "go along wid ye. Faith, and ye know well that yer horders will be kept sure."

At this Tim took his departure, and soon after the physician came. He shook his head, but said nothing, as he examined and dressed Burt's wounds. He then

dressed George Tobias's gashes, which were more flesh wounds than aught else, while Burt had several very aggravating wounds, especially a deep ugly gash which extended clear over his head from side to side. The physician took Mrs. O'Riley aside and gave her instructions for the care of the patients; then he returned to the room, and with Harry Baine's assistance, Burt was removed to a large, well-ventilated bed-room in another part of the house.

That evening Harry had a long talk with his timely acquaintance, old Tim, and unhesitatingly told him Burt Lester's story.

"Then," said Tim, when Harry had concluded, "the lad is me own nephew." As the old man said this, he wiped the moisture from his eyes.

"Yes," replied Harry, "your sister Alice is his mother, and she is a good, motherly woman too. Her family reside in Cinapolis, and I had the pleasure of visiting them for several days in company with poor Burt here."

"Faith, and me nephew has been after risking his head for these many years in the detective business to find his old Uncle Tim, sure?"

"Yes, sir," replied Harry, "and through you he expected to also learn the whereabouts of his aunt Emily. It seems that you never gave the gentleman's name whom your sister Emily married."

"Perhaps, sir, I have been afther committin' a great wrong," said Tim thoughtfully. "Sure, and I have not written home these many, many years, but I was afther havin' some mighty good reasons for playin' hermit like wid my own people; and everybody else that was afther a knowin' me. I'll jest tell you my sthory, sir."

As he said this he knocked the ashes from his pipe, and laid it away, so that he could the better talk. Harry lit a fresh cigar, and gave his whole attention to smoking it and listening to Tim, who spoke as follows:

"I and my sister Emily was after leaving old England over thirty long years ago, and, if I do say it meself, there wasn't a foiner looking lad on board the ship

than was Tim Mannahan, nor one that had in his day courted and talked swate to more pretty girls, sure. Well, me sister Emily and meself was after getting acquainted with a mighty slick talking chap and his sister, who was a young girl in her teens, and I want to be afther telling ye now, sir, that a big time it was we had a coming over. Their home was in New York city, and I tell ye it was ilegant how they dressed. He talked swate to me sister, and I talked my nicest to his, sure, and when we were afther landing, I found it was meself that was the only level-headed member of the quarthet. The slick-talking New Yorker had fallen heels over head in love with me sister Emily and she, begorra, was heartbroken at the very thoughts of partin' wid him. With meself it was only a flirtation, sure; but would you belave it, the little dark-eyed Katie (that was her name), was afther being in real earnest, and thought I meant all the honeyed words I had whispered to her.

"Faith, sir, she was a beautiful girrul. Young and romantic loike, her fresh and budding affections couldn't stand, though, the fire of me own polished talk. Those moonlight walks on the old ship's deck, the low, musical whisperings of me voice and those killing glances, that, if I do say it meself, Tim Mannahan could bate the whole world a givin', sure, was what played the divil with her happiness. I was afther looking on the whole business as a pastime of an idle hour. Whin we parted in New York she was afther laying her head on this very breast, sure, and telling me that every word I had whispered and every glance I had given her would be held as precious jewels in the sacred casket of memory, to be cherished so long as life endured, and carried down to her grave. I told her she was a foolish girrul, and that I was afther meaning nothing by me flirting and that she would soon forget me. And sure enough, before quite a year went over the young creature's head, the casket of jewels had turned to wormwood and ashes and seasoned up to bate the wide world with a burning hate, and I was afther finding it out in this way:

"Soon afther raching Ameriky, me sister Emily and meself came on to Cinapolis, where, you say, me sister

Alice and her family are afther living at the present time. Well, Emily, in spite of all me advice to the contrary, kept a writing and a writing to that smooth-talking New York chap and, without even speaking to me about it, invited the spalpeen to come and join a hunting and fishing excursion that meself and others had planned. Sure, and she did that. And his sister Kate was just as self-willed as me own sister, and, by the Holy Mother, she came along, but a devil of a bit of attention did she pay to meself, and I was after being mightily pleased that she didn't, for to be real honest wid ye, I was clear gone, boots and all, sure, in love wid an iligant lady who lived in Cinapolis, and who was agoin' along on the excursion. We were to be gone a month and when we stuck our stakes for our final camp, it was within a half a mile of the lake over there in McGuffin's pasture, where the poor boy was afther getting well-nigh drowned this mornin'. Faith and everything went a swimmin' for about a week afther we went into camp, except I was a feeling uncomfortable meself, for Katie, the black-eyed fiend, made it her business, sure, to be mighty smilin' and purring like around Mollie Burchard, the young lady to whom meself was engaged to be married, and as the days went by Mollie got to likin' Katie a deal of a sight—they were afther being loike sisters.

"Well, one marnin', jist afther we had breakfasted, Mollie came to me where I was a standing under a shady tree, and says she to me, says she, 'Tim, what makes your dear ould face so cloudy?'

"Says I to Mollie, 'Sure, my darling, I don't loike to have you going about wid Katie.'

"'Well, Tim,' says she, 'I've promised to go out and gather flowers with her this morning,--here she comes now. I will see you to-night, Tim,' says she, and at this she threw a swate kiss to me with her delicate little white hand, and then joined Katie.

"To save me life, sir, I couldn't help it, and so I just followed them through the heavy copsewood until they came to the lake, and faith, sir, I never can forget how like an angel Mollie looked that marnin', standing on the pebbled beach with the soft breeze a fannin' her

cheeks and a blowin' her golden hair about. Ah, sure, sir, it was a picture that I am afther seein' these many long years, whether I am awake or slaping, sure, for I never saw Mollie alive afther that marnin'."

Old Tim took a time-stained and faded letter from his pocket, and reaching it to Harry, said in a broken, husky voice, "This lether, sure, will be afther tellin' you the rest."

Harry took the offered letter, and old Tim bowed his head on his hands and wept in stifled sobs.

The letter read as follows:

"Timothy Mannahan:—

"I loathe, hate and scorn you with all the bitterness of my being. For a time you were gentle and affectionate to me, and with low musical words of endearment taught me to love and idolize you; then you turned away in your dignity, and mockingly told me that the lesson you had taught, and I so foolishly learned, was all a myth and had served its purpose in the idling way of the hours. Ah! how madly I loved you, and how appropriate are Tennyson's words, (they seemed burned and forever engraven on my heart, now so hardened and flinty), where he says:

'I hold it true whate'er befall—
I feel it when I sorrow most;
'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.'

"I came uninvited to see you, and learned before we met at Cinapolis that you were betrothed to Mollie Burchard, and that your whole heart was given to her. Then I said, the being of my unquenched love is no more, and the jewels of my burning affection for him shall be crushed into ashes and scattered from me. But lo! instead of being able to throw them aside they turned into the bitterness of wormwood, and like a consuming cancer commenced feeding on my brain; eating, eating away, night and day, evening and morning, until I felt and knew that my reason was being dethroned,

and I was going mad! But no one knew it, or suspected it. While you slept, sweetly dreaming of her who never could have loved you the half that I did, I sat upright in my bed with open staring eyes, and held my sides in suppressed mirth to think that no one knew I was an insane woman, or could ever guess how sweet to me sounded the whispered word, 'REVENGE,' which continually rings in my ears. Ah!—

'Love to my passionate soul,
Was not like hers, a mere part
Of her existence; but the whole—
The very life breath of my heart.'

"Yes, my discarded affections shall be revenged this very day, and the sacrifice shall be she whom you love as madly as I once loved you. I know you will say that it was a pity to sacrifice her, so young, so gentle, so fair, so lovable, for your misdoings. But what does a mad woman care for pity, if her revenge secures to her the fullest cup? Perhaps it is better that she should die young and innocent. Yes, it is better, far better than to learn the bitter lesson that awaits her when the ardor of your affections cool.

"Proud, arrogant, ambitious man, you did not think that the young, silly girl whose love you won so easily, and then spurned so coldly, would in one short year mete out to you this awful vengence.

"Let it teach you that a woman can hate, as she has loved, with her whole heart, life and soul. Let it teach you and all others not to trifle with the God-given passions of a young girl's affection.

"When you receive this letter, Mollie will be dead. And oh! how miserable will be your wailing anguish and the life of self-reproach that you will lead on and on to your grave, for before the God who permits me to write this letter, you are Mollie Burchard's murderer, and the sweetened poison that fell from your lips not only causes me to perform this deed as a servant of destiny, but also causes me to die with her.

"Farewell.

"KATE."

When Harry had finished reading the letter, he refolded and handed it back to old Tim, who, as he did so, said in a low, faltering voice, "We was afther finding this lether in the tent about noon of the day they went away, and just as the sun went down that afternoon, we rescued their dead and floating bodies out of the lake near the cliff. Come, and I will show you their graves."

Harry arose and followed the old man out in the dusk of evening to the lone mulberry tree. There a mossy and flower bedecked grave was indicated by a low slab of marble, with the names "Mollie and Kate," with the date of their untimely death inscribed thereon.

"For thirty-two years, sir," said Tim, "this has been my greatest care, to keep the grass growing and the flowers blooming on these graves. My sister Emily was afther marrying Katie's brother within a month after this terrible tragedy, and sure I have never seen her since, nor heard from her."

"What was the gentleman's name whom she married?' asked Harry.

"Faith, sir, and I have never mentioned his name since he and Emily were married."

"Won't you please mention it now?" asked Harry, persistently.

"Oh, sure, and it was something like Zachariah Willets."

At this the old postmaster turned about, led the way to the cottage, and there left Harry to ponder over what he had heard.

Thus week after week glided by, and in the meantime Tobs grew strong again, but still remained at old Tim's cottage. None of the villagers were any the wiser for his or his companion's being there.

Burt Lester still lay in a half unconscious stupor, trembling on the scales between life and death. At times he revived for a little while, but his mind seemed wandering and confused. A half dozen different times had Harry been called by the kind nurse, Mrs. O'Riley, to what she thought was poor Burt's deathbed, but he had as often revived.

How is it, that many times when the body is racked

with pain, and floats close up to death's door, a superhuman strength is suddenly infused and instilled into the dying spirit blaze, causing it to burn up more brightly again? There is a myterious, unnamed power that at times seems to wind up our exhausted strength, and again put the human mechanism in motion.

This power, whatever it is, is resistless in its freaks of influencing the great mainspring of life, and turning the many wheels in the intricate combination of the human body. So intricate, indeed, that to this late day of science it remains entrenched and undiscovered behind the murky clouds of the known.

At times the human clockwork seems well-nigh robbed of its motive power, its tick-tock comes so feebly on, yet, when the slow swinging pendulum seems about to rest forever, an unseen spirit-hand touches the secret spring, and the slackened wire coil of life quivers, and regains its tension again.

Oh, tell me, you wise ones of earth, you philosophers deep and profound, who rest your faith on science rather than on the Word of God, from whence comes this unknown power? Ah, you are silent. Know, then, that it comes from God through ministering angel spirits. Ay! through those white-robed idols, our beloved dead, who cluster around us in the silent hour of thought, and impel us to seek a higher and purer life.

CHAPTER XXIV.

BASEMENT QUARTERS IN GIBBON'S PLACE.

WHO has not had friends, or, perhaps, near relatives, who, becoming weary of the rough and uneven highway over which their bruised feet traveled, would be called to stop by the thistly wayside, until Father Time with his scythe came up with them, and then commence and ask so many questions, cross questions, leading questions, principal questions,

and subordinate questions, that the fevered patient would be worn almost to skin and bone.

Even a bed of down would at last feel to their emaciated bodies like one of rocks, and whether sleeping fitful snatches of slumber, or staring at the bare walls around, old Father Time, with his scythe in reaping posture, could always be seen ; and woe to the patient if he contradicted himself in the continuous, attorney-like cross questions that are hurled at him. For just so sure as he does, then the scythe will hastily prune off the patient's thread of life from the army of the living, and our friend or relative passes over the silent river to join the great majority beyond.

What is death ? Ah! how many have asked the question, how few have answered it!

To me, death is like the transplanting of a flower from my garden to my conservatory.

In life we seem sojourning in a valley with a mountain before and behind. Through history and the teachings of the Bible we look far over this mountain behind us, and see our foreparents in the Garden of Eden ; all the patriarchs of old ; the children of Israel crossing the Red Sea ; Pharaoh and his hosts thwarted and drowned in their attempt to follow.

We see Moses coming down out of the mount with the tables of stone on which the law was written.

We see the Son of Man with His disciples ; His hands raised to heal the sick, the halt, and blind. We hear Him blessing the chubby-faced children, and say : "Of such are the Kingdom of Heaven." We see Him nailed to the cross, and we see Him die a cruel and ignominious death that our enfranchised spirits might be able to live in that world to come.

Yes, we turn and look to the towering mountain ahead of us, and through our faith in Christ Jesus we see the New Jerusalem, with its streets paved with burnished gold, and then we remember He has said, "In my Father's house are many mansions." By faith in a life after death, the cold and barren peaks and gray rocks of Eternity lose all their terror to us.

The unanswering dead can tell us nothing. But how

many times have we all seen the rigid, careworn, wrinkled features of those who carried a great burden in life closed in death, and observed the untensioning, calming, smoothing out of the deep furrows of care until a halo of contentment, even a smile of joy, seemed to have hovered over the face as the spirit fled, and left its pleased stamp thereon?

Who has never felt, in the silent hours of vision, the presence of spirit friends hovering about them?

Those who have not are dead to sensibilities they are heir to. The spirit of the dead live, and as Taylor, that Shakespearean divine, has beautifully said:

"The living are the only dead.
The dead live—never more to die,
And oft, when we mourn them fled,
They never were so nigh."

From Burt Lester's bed of sickness we will now lead you, reader, to other scenes that are being enacted by those you have already learned to know.

A number of blocks away from the attic room in Cinapolis where old Hinchey's headquarters at one time, were, there is a short by-street connecting two broader ones, much as the cross of a capital letter "H" connects the upright strokes.

While this street was not in the very business center of the city, it was not far away.

The buildings were all built of brick, with stone finish, but at the time we write, sadly on the decline.

About midway of this street, in fact, cornering on the only alley the street could boast of, there stood a large, three-story building, which, at one time, was occupied by the owner as a jewelry store, but that was long ago.

In front of the door stood six pillars; three near the building and three farther away toward the street, making a porch-like entrance. These columns were the height of one story, but immediately on top of them was another similar arrangement, and so on up for full three and a half stories, although the building itself was only three stories in height.

This peculiar addition was finished off at the top with a dome-like covering, and contained in front an immense clock dial, and within the machinery of a monster time-piece.

Its lengthy pendulum had long since ceased to swing, which was discernible through the glass work in front; and for the matter of that, the large wheels and small ones, in fact, all the gearing, could be seen from the opposite side of the street, and had more the appearance of a huge spider hanging in a web, in its now motionless state, than aught else.

But there the deserted building stood, with its great clock in front like an elaborate sign, as if were announcing to the world in general, and the people of Cinapolis in particular, the fact that the vender within had time to sell, either in retail parcels or job lots.

On a certain evening, several weeks after the tragic affair took place on the cliff in McGuffin's pasture, old Hinchey came down this by-street and turned quickly into the alley.

The shades of evening were closing in rapidly, but he never turned to look to the right or the left, or even over his shoulder, in which peculiar way of looking he was quite an adept.

When the rear of the building was reached, he turned at the corner and disappeared down a low-arched stairway, then the rattling of keys and opening of doors went on until three doors had been opened, and after Hinchey passed through, carefully locked again.

Presently the old 'Possum lit a dim light, and by its flickering blaze a glimpse of his new quarters could be seen.

It was a basement room with no visible outlet—except the door—and was large and roomy.

On a rag cot in one corner two little boys lay sleeping. "Ah!" said Hinchey holding up the light so as to see the little ones, "my little beauties are still here. Fine young gentlemen they are, too. Old Hinchey makes the dear young men very wise. If they bring home silk handkerchiefs and other valuables, then they get a good supper, but if they hang around the streets of such a

nice, rich city as Cinapolis all day, and not bring anything to old Hinchey, who is so very kind to them, they go without their supper."

While the old man was still looking at them and musing on their probable profit to him, the little boys awakened. First, they blinked and blinked, and then yawned and stretched and rubbed their little fists in their waking eyes, and finally sat up on their miserable couch. During all this time old Hinchey watched them much as a fancy stock man would watch his fatted calves—only, God have mercy, these children were not in a fatted condition.

Their little ribs looked like a very diminutive, many-hooped cask might, with the staves fallen out on one side and the tiny hoops fallen downward.

Their spindling arms and legs had very large joints, but were very small and wasted between them.

Their cheek bones were very prominent; their eyes very large; their little cheeks hollow and sunken; their colorless lips were tightly drawn, and when they attempted to speak, their long, unkempt hair and set teeth made them look ghostly.

"Oh, please, sir," said the oldest (who could not have been more than ten years old) "we are so hungry, oh, what kept you so long?"

But instead of answering them, old Hinchey gazed on their emaciated, ghastly faces in a frenzy of delight, and muttered low to himself, as he set the sputtering candle on a shelf, and rubbed his greasy long-nailed hands together. "Ah! what little beauties to beg. Who could withhold the nickels when appealed to by such starved looks?"

"Nickels, did you say, you timid old rascal," said Hinchey, eyeing himself in a small pocket mirror that hung on the wall near where the candle stood. "You'd better say dimes; yes, quarters and even half dollars. Who ever saw such a beautiful, appropriate look on beggars' faces?"

"Oh, sir, can we have some water to drink?" asked the little starving boy again, "and something to eat, please?"

"Yes, my dears, that is just what old Hinchey was a going to ask the dear young gentlemen—if they wasn't hungry or thirsty."

"Indeed we are, sir," both the little boys replied together.

"Well, you lay down again and old Hinchey will go bring a pitcher of water and some eatables."

Saying this, the villainous old man, by the aid of his keys withdrew from the basement quarters and thought very seriously, as he locked the doors, of plugging up the key-hole, fearful, no doubt, that the skin and bone frames within, who a short time before were such chubby-faced, round-limbed boys, might effect their escape through that slight opening.

He hurried out into the street, and bent his steps to an unfrequented restaurant, purchasing a few sandwiches made of stale biscuits and rashers of bacon.

As he started back to "Gibbon's Place" (Gibbon being the name of the once wealthy jeweler who erected the building), he did a very strange thing, for him.

He stepped into a saloon and purchased two bottles of beer, which he added to the basket wherein he carried the sandwiches.

At the corner, before turning into this by-place, he filled his pitcher with water from a public well, and then hurried on down the street, turned into the alley and disappeared.

Just behind him a dark figure was stealthily shadowing on, on, closer and closer.

As old Hinchey unlocked the first door, the dark figure was within an arm's length of him. The door was finally opened, and the old 'Possum glided in and closed it behind him. He then applied his key, but he could not insert it into the lock.

Again and again he tried, but without success. So he had to give it up and push on to the next door.

The key readily unlocked it, but to lock it again he could not. He tried the key on the outside of the door, but could do no more than he could on the inside.

He pushed on to the inner door, opened it, and

walking to the shelf, took down the candle which he had extinguished before leaving, lit it, and returned to the outer door, bracing it thoroughly, as did he also the second door.

He then tried to lock the inner door, but to no avail. Neither his trying or muttering oaths would avail him, so he contented himself wlth bracing the inner door as he had the other two.

Then Hinchey felt contented, and proceeded to appease the thirst and hunger of the almost famished boys.

He sat with them at the board, and after each of the little ones were provided with a biscuit and rasher of bacon, the old, free-hearted villain actually tapped a bottle of Budwiser beer, and after filling his own glass, which was a very large one, he poured out a small cupful for each of "the dear young gentlemen," as he called them.

Then, with his affected suavity of speech and ghastly grin, he said: "Wall, my dear young gentlemen, here is to your health——"

But where was his glass of beer?

He looked around in time to see a tall, muscular man, in English dress, take the empty glass from his face, and as he did so, coolly remark, that it was "bloody good beer, you know."

The little boys went on with their eating, caring more for their sandwiches than they did for the English stranger.

Old Hinchey, on the other hand, was for a moment dumbfounded. He stared at the stranger, with his usually restless eyes wide open.

Finally the stranger spoke: "You don't seem to remember your old acquaintances very well, but I must say you are deucedly hospitable."

Saying this, he tapped the remaining bottle of beer, lifted it to his lips, where it remained until an empty bottle was all there was to take away.

At last old Hinchey recovered from his amazement sufficiently to speak, and, in an angry tone, said: "Who are you, anyway, and how did you get in here?"

"I, sir, am an old penitentiary friend of yourself, Mr. Henry McGuffin. We occupied adjoining cells in the prison. As to how I came in these private apartments of yours, I will only say that I accompanied you home from the saloon where you purchased this beer."

As he said this, he very appropriately placed his right hand on the waistband of his pants.

"You see," he continued, in a light and easy conversational style of speech, "although many years have passed over our heads since we met, or rather parted, for, if you remember, we changed our barber-pole convict suits for citizen dress the same morning, and in presence of the keeper shook hands at parting, you declaring that your life from thenceforth should be a model of uprightness, and I making the same declaration, howbeit, I believed at the time you were lying, and knew mighty well that I was."

"Ah, I know you, now," said old Hinchey, extending his hand and shaking the newcomer's warmly, "it is Harlan Barretson, my dear friend of long ago. Oh, I am so glad to see you, though I am very poor, I am, indeed—spent nearly all the money I had for these sandwiches and the beer."

"But where are my sandwiches," cried Hinchey, looking in the basket, and then on the board, and from there to the now attentive faces of the small boys.

"My goodness gracious me," exclaimed the old 'Possum in unfeigned astonishment, "these young men have eaten every crumb and you have drank my beer, and now old Hinchey can starve, I suppose, for all anybody cares."

"Here," said Barretson, throwing down a twenty-dollar bank-note on the table, "here are twenty dollars. Now go and replenish the eatables, and don't fail to bring a case of beer back with you, though you have to hire a dray, or a half-dozen of them, for the matter of that."

Hinchey departed, and in due time returned with a heaping basket of brown rusks, corn beef, cold mutton, and a rasher of bacon, also a full case of beer.

"Did you load my locks for me?" asked Hinchey. "Not a single door can I lock."

"I believe I did do something of that sort," Barretson replied, "but then you are surely sufficiently skilled in the lock-picking business to be able to clean them in a few minutes in the morning"

"Well, you are one of us, belong to the profession, and so I will forgive you this time," said old Hinchey, grinning his usual horrid, vacant grin.

"One of you? Belong to the profession?" repeated Barretson, in a voice that was highly flavored with contempt; "not by a big jump, old man! Harlan Barretson isn't that kind of a chap any more, nor have I been, for better than a dozen years. If I was," he went on, "I would not be following you into such miserable quarters as these, to secure your valuable services to do a job I don't care to dirty my own hands with."

"Ho, ho," said Hinchey, "some one in your way, my dear good friend?"

"That is what they call it, I believe," answered Barretson, as he tapped a fourth bottle.

"Who is this wicked man, I wonder, that wants to bother you," asked Hinchey.

"His name is Timothy Mannahan, and he lives at a place called the Mills. I believe he is postmaster at that place."

"Oh, that is a long way from here, my dear friend," said Hinchey.

"Nevertheless, I want you to go there," replied Barretson, "and do the job—you understand, eh?"

"Understand? Why, my dear friend, I think you speak plain enough, only you are not through yet."

"I guess I am," replied Barretson, looking a little clouded at Hinchey's remark.

"Well, then, I can't do the job for you," answered Hinchey, "and I am very sorry to disappoint you, I am indeed."

"But I will pay you for it, and I will pay you mighty well," said Barretson.

"How much?" asked Hinchey.

"A thousand," was Barretson's reply.

"Dollars or pounds?" asked Hinchey.

"Dollars, of course," replied Barretson.

"Then of course, my dear good friend, I can't do the job," said Hinchey, decidedly.

"Well, what will you charge me to do the business up in shape?" asked Barretson, half angrily.

"Five thousand dollars, even money, is my price," replied Hinchey, "and no discount given to the trade or reductions made on job lots. Terms, payable in advance."

"What proof would I have that you were acting in good faith with me?" asked Barretson, who by this time was getting pretty well under the influence of the drink.

"Oh, my dear," said Hinchey, seating himself in a crouching posture just in front of Barretson. "You don't think, I hope, that I would tell you, my good friend, an untruth?" The old 'Possum, as he said this, put on a desperately forlorn and injured-innocence sort of an expression, as much as to say, "The idea of doubting my integrity in a professional matter is simply preposterous."

Thus the early part of the night wore away, and the last part came around. Just as the morrow's day was breaking in the Eastern sky, two forms emerged from the basement of "Gibbon's Place."

"I will go this way, my dear friend," says one of them, whom we recognize as Hinchey, "and,"—he continues,—"will be back in just three days. Meet me here at the expiration of that time, and I will tell you how the old chap struggled, and whether he sent any message to you."

With this they parted, Barretson hurrying along the street toward "The Arlington," thinking what a fool he had been to "booze up" and tell old Hinchey so much that ought never have been breathed to any one. "Howbeit," he muttered, "I am five thousand dollars poorer than I was, and old Hinchey is five thousand dollars ahead."

Harlan Barretson was a man of powerful frame, with, however, a sadly dwarfed conscience. His appetite for the social glass had grown on him with the years and luxurious living.

For some dozen years he had been the lord proprietor

of "Barret Hall," the old Barretson estate in Warwickshire, England. He had obtained possession of the estate by fraudulent evidence showing that Timothy Mannahan, the rightful owner, was dead.

During these years, Harlan Barretson had never married, but in a quiet way searched for the whereabouts of the missing heir.

Accidently, he had learned through an old, unfinished letter that Barretson Mannahan had commenced to his brother Timothy, the whereabouts of this man who might any day step in and dispossess him. Moreover, he was desirous now of marrying, and had found a lady of rich family and with old aristocratic blood in her veins, to whom he had given all the affections that a long life of debauch had left in his selfish heart. True, it was not much to give, not as much as the lady really expected, but then she was desirous of marrying him. No, not him, but his estate.

While Harlan Barretson lounges about the corridors of "The Arlington," musing in mental speculation on the best way to put in three days' time, let us also speculate on what old Hinchey will discover at the Mills, and what his villainous hands will find there to do.

Our deep-felt sympathies shall remain with the two little waifs imprisoned in the basement room at Gibbon's Place.

They are provided with a few dry crumbs and a single pitcher of water, as rations for three long, lonely, weary days.

Let us commend them to the Eternal, Infinite and Allwise God of Heaven and Earth. We, His children, are but finite creatures, unable to fully comprehend Him, and can only know Him through His own revelations. To that Book, to which so many aching, wounded hearts have turned for comfort and consolation, let us turn, with full faith in Him who "doeth all things well," ever remembering, it emphatically says that here "We see through a glass darkly."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE DETECTIVES RETURN TO HAMPTON. THE INIMITABLE IN MORE TROUBLE.

IT will be necessary for us to go just far enough back in our story to explain that C. McGuffin believed Tobs to be dead. In fact old Hinchey, on returning from the pasture cliff, told him that not only Tobs, but also his two distinguished city editors, were sleeping the "quiet sleep that knows no waking," in the bottom of the lake.

When the furnished room was examined, and his guests' absence discovered, it seemed to confirm the old 'Possum's story beyond the shade of doubt.

Hinchey was not slow to impress his brother with the idea that he had rendered most valuable services, and, therefore, should be additionally rewarded, but McGuffin called a business turn on his avaricious brother by telling him that in disposing of the city gentlemen he had only done so to protect and free himself from eye witnesses.

Old Hinchey pretended to be greatly cast down by his brother's decision, and soon after took his leave. He knew well enough that the drowning men were rescued and in all probabilities alive, but they had escaped, and there was no use of making the Phenomenal McGuffin dissatisfied by telling him.

One thing was certain, that Tobs and his companions would give the McGuffin farm a wide berth until such time as they were ready to make trouble. "And that," muttered Hinchey, with a shrug of his shoulders, "is none of my business."

Thus several weeks had glided by, and in the meantime Burt Lester had been reclaimed from the verge of death, along which his prostrate body had floated so long on the fretful waves of uncertainty.

The officials at Washington had been notified by old Tim that he was going away, who suggested Mrs. O'Ri-

ley as his successor, and in due time, after all the necessary and unnecessary questions that could be thought of were asked and answered, and a great many papers were signed and seals affixed, etc., the Widow O'Riley was suddenly transferred from the humble life of a private citizen to a United States official handling the mail that came and departed from the Mills post-office. The remuneration per year being five and twenty dollars.

On a certain evening, soon after the above arrangements were perfected, a carriage drew up in front of old Tim's cottage, which was nicely kept by the Widow O'Riley—the same carriage and the same driver who had brought them to it. Harry, Burt, Tobs and the ex-postmaster were leaving the Mills. Just before starting, old Tim withdrew to the double grave beneath the lone tree.

Although many long years had passed away since these graves were made, yet, when old Tim wrapt his sable garments more closely about him, they covered a lonely heart, which in silence wept for those two, Mollie and Katie.

Ah, over thirty years had passed away, and many times since then old Tim had seen the rosy wine cup go round the social board, had listened to the singing of many merry songs, and watched the mazy dance go whirling on, but he never forgot the memory of those whose lives ceased when his life of regret commenced.

Harry Baine stole softly out toward the sacred spot, and when he drew near, he heard old Tim saying, in a slow, contemplative way, "Sure, an' I am about to leave you, sacred spot of earth, for a time. Old Tim's after being an old man now, and never yet has he bent a knee to aught in Heaven above or earth below, but this mound of clay. I thought no one cared for me, sure, and, faith, they were looking for me all the time. I have heard there was such a thing as looking 'through nature up to nature's God.' Faith, and who knows now but I have been afther looking up to my God all these lonely years through this little plot of ground, and never even suspicioned that I was doin' it?

"Ah, sure, we are all blind-folded willful children.

Neither can we see nor will we listen to what is afther being told to us. I guess there is a Creator, sure, after all. Faith, there are so many creatures here on earth, there must have been a Creator to have made them. The very grandeur of the towering mountains and the deep forests, the thundering, mad-capped waves and 'still wathers in shady places,' the carpet-like grasses and wayside violets, the gorgeous scene of the setting sun, when gold-lined clouds are hanging looped around, the myriads of twinkling stars above, that peep over each other's shoulders down at me, and the gentle whisperings of the night winds that blow my gray hairs about—all is after telling me, sure, that there is a Creator. Sure, and I guess the poet about hit it when he said :

'This world is full of beauty,
Like other worlds above;
And if we do our duty,
It might be full of love.'

"The devil of the whole business with me is that I've real strong suspicions I never did my duty as I should. Well, well—we'll see, we'll see."

As the old man said this, he turned and walked slowly back to the cottage.

A bunk had been arranged in the barouche-like carriage, across the end of the two seats which fronted each other, on which Burt Lester was carefully laid, with Harry Blaine by his head and old Tim sitting next his feet.

Tobs, who now was wholly recovered, took a seat beside the driver, and soon they were wheeling along the smooth roads toward Hampton.

In about half an hour after they started, the old moon came slowly up the eastern horizon, and looked calmly, and Harry thought, approvingly down upon them.

The weeks that had passed by since Burt received his wounds, had been very confining and tedious to Harry, and now, on this pleasant evening in early June, he felt uncommonly light-hearted and gleeful.

A letter had been written to Lawyer Westover at once, after Burt's mishap, informing the Chicago attor-

ney that another detective or detectives would have to be employed on the case, for a while at least.

A careful copy of Burt Lester's records, relative to points and impressions in the case, were sent to the lawyer, so that Lester's successor could go on where he left off. Although the night was pleasant, and the roads smooth, yet Hampton was not reached until a full hour passed midnight.

The exacting, methodical old landlord, Mr. Scudmore, was roused up from a sound sleep, and greeted Harry Gibbs, his old boarder, warmly.

Rooms were provided, and Burt Lester, who, by-the-way, had stood the trip remarkably well, was soon fast asleep, as was also Tobs.

Harry and old Tim had agreed between themselves to go over to the depot, and call on Edward Willets.

When they reached the depot, they discovered the Inimitable- through the window, surveying himself in front of a glass.

He was alone, and as they came up, he was saying: "Yes, sir, your honor, I am only pleading for that which is my own. The very Declaration of American Independence guarantees to me the right I claim. It says 'all men are created equal.' That is my doctrine, your honor, and has been ever since I was a laughing boy, cradled and rocked in the lap of luxury and basking in the sunshine of poetic muse. Later, I was precipitated out into a cold, selfish, hard, practical world, since which time—" just here he discovered our two friends approaching, and he at once hastened to greet Harry very warmly, though it must be admitted he was somewhat confused.

"This," said Harry, "is a friend of mine, Mr. Timothy."

"Mr. Timothy," said the glowing Inimitable Willets, "this is indeed a pleasure, which, I freely admit on the outset, I was not prepared for."

Old Tim hardly understood why Mr. Willets gave him such a hearty welcome, nevertheless, thanking him for it, he observed as he looked out of the window down the long straight stretch of railroad track, that "Sure, sir, and it's a beautiful moonlight night."

"Beautiful, my newly made friend, did you say?" interrogatively observed Willets, and then, before old Tim could frame a reply, he went on, "beautiful, I should say so, sir. Let your eyes for a brief moment wander out of the window and down that long dim aisle. Observe, sir, the tall stately columns of trees that border on either side, and the soft, mellow rays of the moon falling aslant and shimmering through the openings of the boughs. Beautiful, sir, why it is, as it were, positively enchanting!

"I frequently ask myself if there are many of God's creatures favored, as I am, with such pleasant surroundings and such en hanting sights. What, may I ask, are gothic cathedrals? What are gilded shrines, sir, overlaid and inlaid with burnished gold, compared with this very view of a forest temple, as it were. The stately trees are the countless columns, while the dome of Heaven is the bending vault of God's own blue sky."

As the Inimitable was calling his listeners' attention to the moonlight view out of the window, he kept his big-jointed index finger on the go, up and down, as if it were endowed with perpetual motion.

"How have you been getting along, Mr. Willets, since I went away from Hampton?" asked Harry.

"My dear sir, and highly respected friend," said Willets, "I am in trouble again." As he said this, the happy, glowing look was pushed off his face by the troubled wave that took its place.

"What is the matter now?" asked Harry, a little surprised.

"If my charming friend, Mr. Timothy, here, will excuse me for relating certain pecuniary personal matters, I shall, I assure you, be most happy to inform you of the grossest injustice of the present age."

Old Tim readily gave his assent, and the Inimitable, after wiping real or imaginary perspiration from his forehead, commenced: "You well know, my charming friend, that we are but children of destiny, as it were. Pardon me, sir, for making the broad and unqualified assertion that I am at the present time dispossessed of

—of—shall I name it, sir? One little word tells it. Let me first give the definition :

"First," said Willets, counting off with his fingers, "it is an enemy to the commercial and social world. Second," counting off another finger, "it is the magic key that unlocks and tramples the chain of friendship asunder, and makes the warmest friends bitter enemies. Third," another finger being counted off, "it hovers around the rich and prosperous like a tempting, alluring bait, but flees from the poor man as if he was a leper. Fourth," again repeating the finger act, "its want will starve the poor man and break the richest corporation in America.

"As I before observed, one word tells it—CREDIT! Yes, sir, credit is the word, and I am absolutely destitute of such an article, and, too, at a time when I need it most.

"To be more explicit, my charming Harry, I will say that our landlord has lately become a fanatic on the subject of running his hotel on the pay-in-advance system, and I was unfortunately the victim selected to make a test case of. My suspicions are that I am the only boarder in the house that is aware of his fanaticism.

"If there is any one bump," continued the Inimitable, tapping his head with his long, slim, big-jointed finger, "that nature has made more prominent than another in this landlord's cranium, it is the bump of persistency. He is a holy terror, he is, upon my life he is, to follow up and adhere like a sticking plaster to any given principle or system that he may in an unthoughted moment adopt.

"In short, sir, my purse kept up with this devilish hobby of his until last night, just before the supper hour, when, to my great and inexplainable grief, I discovered that all my ready capital, surplus, and undivided profits had fled, leaving my purse in as empty a condition as was my yearning stomach.

"This is the purse that so shamefully went back on me," said Willets, drawing a withered-looking pocket-book from his breeches pocket, "and never before, sir, never," he went on, "did I catch on to the real meaning of what Shakespeare was driving at when he said—

'He that steals my purse steals trash.'

"I have," he continued, "been studying up an argumentative speech, which I propose hurling broadside at this landlord to-morrow morning—it is not necessary for me to say before breakfast. My text is taken from the Declaration of American Independence where it says, 'All men are created equal.'"

"The rest of his boarders are not made test cases of, and, therefore, I claim there is a line of inequality drawn to my disadvantage, and my gnawing stomach, this very minute—the strongest feelings known to mortal man—backs the claim I make for all it is worth. Pope has beautifully said :

'What, and how great the virtue of the art
To live on little with a cheerful heart.'

"But I am, my charming sir, reduced a peg below, for I haven't even a little." Here the Inimitable's handkerchief came in play again, and was used with a nervous hand.

"You have had no supper then ?" said Harry.

"Not a morsel, my charming companion, not a morsel."

"Excuse me a moment, Mr. Willets," said Harry, "while I go across the way to get me a cool drink from the town pump. You and Mr. Timothy visit while I am gone."

A moment later, and Harry was out on the street, walking briskly along toward the hotel, and muttering to himself, "I'll just give the old miser, Scudmore, a piece of my mind, so I will. He is always glad to see me, because he sees good money in the exorbitant fancy prices he charges me."

By this time he had reached the hotel, and again the landlord was roused from a sound nap.

When he saw it was Mr. Gibbs he was all smiles and ready to accommodate him in any way he could.

"I want something to eat," said Harry in a stern voice.

"Certainly, sir, certainly; come this way and we will see what can be found in the larder."

Harry provided himself with a tray from a table, as he passed through the dining room, and when the larder was reached, he commenced filling it by first putting on a half loaf of bread and a small plate of butter. Then a large piece of cold corn beef, some cold potatoes, and such other eatables as could be found.

"You wish to take the tray up stairs, I suppose?" remarked mine host, in his most agreeable and pleasant manner.

"No, sir," was Harry's brusque reply, "I wish to take it to the depot and give Mr. Willets his supper, and I tell you now, old man, if you ever again play any of your pay-in-advance tricks on him, and then deny him his supper, simply because he has no ready money, you will be very sorry for having done so."

Without waiting for a reply, Harry took up the tray, after filling a small pitcher with milk, and started for the depot.

When Harry marched into the Inimitable's presence with a tray heaped up with eatables, and set them down before him, Willets was absolutely unable to speak a word, but obeyed orders to the letter when Harry told him "to fall to."

The corned beef, cold potatoes, bread and butter disappeared just about the time the bottom of the milk pitcher came in sight.

When he was through, he turned to Harry and old Tim, and offered them cigars, which they both accepted. Soon after their Havanas were lighted, wreaths of blue smoke floated lazily around the room and drifted out at the door.

"My charming and never-to-be-forgotten friend," observed Willets, "the gnawing, hungry sensation in my stomach has disappeared, but there is a yearning, insatiable desire that comes prospecting up my throat to thank you in some appropriate language for this great kindness. It can never be said of you, my esteemed friend, that 'I was hungry and you fed me not.'

"Friendship, my dear sir, is no gossamer thread that

can be woven and then snapped like worthless whipcord.

The thread usually requires long years in its weaving, yet it may be woven in an instant, and when once woven is for all time.

"True, its influence may grow lax at times, and cease to operate, and the once friends may become enemies, yet when the one falls under the power of the other, and the arm is exultingly lifted up to strike, those cords of early friendship gives the heart a sharp twinge, and the vibration whispers—'Peace upon earth, good will to mankind.'

"Before you came, my charming Harry, I was indeed most wretched. I felt that at last my time had come. I could discover no way out of the sombre gloom of despair that was settling like a dark cloud over my poetic soul. But thanks to you, the burden is removed, and again I feel like my craft was sailing joyfully forward under a clear sky, and smooth waters with no breakers ahead. And now, sir, as the poet Moore has said to the world, so say I to you—

'As half in shade, and half in sun,
This world along its path advances;
Oh! may that side the sun shines on
Be all that ever meets thy glances.'

"Thank you, Mr. Willets, for the sentiment," replied Harry. "Now tell us, please, what you have learned, if anything, about the missing money. By-the-way," said Harry, drawing closer and speaking lover, "where is Lin Brinkerhoff?"

"Why he took a lay off," replied Willets, "just before you came, said he was sick,—rather queer, too, he seemed all right until the midnight train came in, then said he was going home."

"When are you going on your vacation?" asked Harry.

"The fifteenth of this month; only ten days more, my charming friend,' replied the Inimitable, "and then I will see my angelic Cinderilla. By-the-way," he continued, "I am going to take Bertha Pembrooke, Pen's little sister, along with me. An old maiden aunt, Zur-

ilda Goodsil by name, has charge of this little darling, and I mean to give the old lady the grand scare of her life by running away with the little beauty. She is only a little more than a year old now."

"You must do nothing of the kind, Mr. Willets," said Harry, half angrily, "the law will have its clutches on your throat in no time, if you commence kidnapping children.

"You have a very easy way of ingratiating yourself in the good graces of people—pardon me, sir, I mean it as a compliment—and the proper thing for you to do, is to pay considerable attention to the little child, and then beg leave to take her along with you, when you go to visit your sisters, and take her away with the full consent of her guardian."

Thus the conversation continued for a couple of hours, and then Harry and old Tim took themselves away toward the hotel.

"Faith," said Tim, as they walked along the silent street, "I can see a look about the lad's face once in awhile that reminds me of my sister Emily, sure enough. We will just be afther asking him a few questions to-morrow, and I'll bet my old boots that he will turn out to be me nephew, sure."

"I tell you, Uncle Tim," said Harry, in a low musical voice, "if you once see this Mr. Willets's sister, Emily, you will swear you are a relative of hers, whether you are or not. She is actually the handsomest woman that ——"

"Hush, hush," said old Tim, "haven't I been afther saying the same thing about my lost Mollie? many and many a time, sure, now, and don't set your heart too strong on your lady love, for I, who have learned the lesson, can tell you that death it is can cheat the richest man living, or the poorest beggar, out of anything they set their heart on in this world. Remember that now, remember that."

Harry made no reply to the old man's speech, and soon after they separated for the night, each seeking the restful quiet of his own room.

The window of Harry Baine's room looked down into the neatly kept garden adjoining the house.

"Ah," thought Harry, "this beautiful moonlight night is emblematic of my own happy thoughts of meeting Emily. To-morrow noon we start for Burt Lester's home in Cinapolis, and only a half-dozen blocks away is 'a little brown cot where lives my true lady love.'"

What is more beautiful than a balmy moonlight night in June? Where is the pen that can adequately describe it?

Harry Blaine soon threw himself down to dream of Emily Willets, but still the calm old moon looked gently down, its silvery light mellowing every object.

The little garden with its shelled walks, bordered on either side with beautiful fragrant flowers, clusters of double roses, the large white and scarlet and red geraniums, the oleander tree just at a turn in the path, and a countless variety of beautiful flowers of all kinds looking smilingly up at the old man in the moon, who, in turn actually smiled as he looked good naturedly down on them.

Just beneath the window, the vining tendrils of a morning glory were twining round and round the lattice work of the low veranda; just beyond stood a fountain, its waters flashing and sparkling in the soft moonlight, making music low and sweet. The night wind came up a little, and sang in plaintive strains its lullaby song through the leafy boughed trees.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE INIMITABLE HAS AN EARLY CALLER.

THE following morning began to dawn bright and clear ere the sun peeped over the horizon.

Beyond the forest and high hills which skirted the little village of Hampton on the east, the sun always made its appearance long before it did down in the shady Hampton valley.

As the light of coming day increased, the stars grew dimmer, and the old moon, which was now low in the west, grew pale and white as if the glow and varnish had all been worn off in crowding its way through the legion of diamond stars that beset its course.

The Inimitable was sitting in his big arm-chair at the depot, patiently waiting for the breakfast hour to come round, although he did not have a cent with which to pay for a meal.

Suddenly he saw a female form flit by his window, and a moment later enter the door.

"Good morning, Mr. Willets, I hope you are not angry at my coming, least ways I don't think you ought to be, after so long a time has passed."

Willets came to his feet like an upheaved beam in a building, and with his hands deep in his breeches pockets stood looking down at the figure for a moment, and then said:

"Miss Goodsil, good morning. Excuse me," said he, "but I beg you to permit me to make an observation before you say another word. I wish to say," he went on, "that you in the long ago were my cherished and cherishing friend. Have I forgotten the happy poetical days which I passed under your cottage roof? No, far from it. I will be frank with you, Miss Goodsil, and confess that after the fevered ardor of my poetic soul, and later the angry words of discourtesy, have had time to cool down to a normal temperature, I am able to truthfully say that a chain of friendship was forged and securely welded around my heart while I was an inmate of your house."

"Oh, Mr. Willets," said the wrinkled spinster, "I was sure all along there must be a tender place in your uncommon poetic soul, I was, indeed I was."

"My charming friend of other days," said Willets, "I will confess more."

Then he paused for a moment, and the spinster laid her head in her hands as she leaned against the ticket office window, mentally saying to herself, "I knew it, I knew he would propose. Oh, what happiness! what will I do with myself."

"I will confess," Willets went on, "that I was thinking of you just before you came in this morning. Thinking of your two little charges, Pen and Bertha. True, one has for a time disappeared, and I, Edward Willets, Esq., am doing my utmost to search him out from the cobwebby rafters of seclusion to prevent your aching heart from bursting."

"You are so kind, Mr. Willets," said the spinster, as she wiped away a few tears that she had by hard work managed to shed, and then thought to herself, "Well, I do wonder if that is all he is going to say?"

"I also have," continued the Inimitable, "an ever restless piece of muscle in this breast, known as my heart, which has as it were, gone out—"

This was too much for the spinster's feelings, and she sobbed aloud in audible tones: "I knew it, I knew it."

The Inimitable looked at the weeping spinster a little clouded, and then went on again: "As I observed, my heart has gone out to these orphan children, and I fancy my imagination is sufficiently vivid and voluminous to adequately comprehend the enormous weight that rests on your bony—I mean slender,—shoulders in discharging the arduous, two-fold duties of administering on the estate of the late Leroy Pembrooke, and becoming the guardian of these two children."

When Zurilda looked up, and with her apron gave her eyes a finishing wipe, there was a cold, frigid, disappointed look on her face, and it remained there until she looked clear around the room, and at last rested her eyes on the good humored face of the Inimitable. Then her best look of resignation chased the other expression away, and ruled supreme on her countenance.

"Mr. Willets," she said, "if you only could find my dear nephew Penfield, I don't know what I would not give you."

She, no doubt, meant by that, that she would give him herself, along with all her earthly possessions, but Willets was either unable to comprehend her meaning, or was not desirous of being entertained in that way.

"I have a letter here, Mr. Willets," said the spinster, "which I am greatly worried over,"

"If my memory serves me aright," observed Willets, "I, myself, at one time in my life received a not-over-courteous letter in this very room, that worried me not a little. In one sense of the word, it was a crusher."

"Oh! Mr. Willets," cried the spinster, "why will you always refer to that horrid letter I sent you? It is so awful aggravating, least ways it makes one feel so miserably uncomfortable."

"My dear Miss Goodsil," replied the Inimitable, "you certainly speak the words of truth and soberness, for I can do nothing less than agree with you. The letter was certainly aggravating in the extreme, and that a miserable, uncomfortable feeling followed in the letter's wake, there can be no doubt of. I myself am a living witness to the undeniable fact, but in the memorable language of Whats-his-name—

'Hold! Enough!'

"Now my charming friend what about the letter in your hand?"

At this the spinster quietly unfolded a letter and held it out at arm's length, and then swayed her head up and down, vainly seeking the proper focus for her failing sight. Then she paused, and blinked and winked, and with the corner of her apron wiped her dimmed eyes, and then went at the letter again, giving two or three insignificant inhaling snuffs with her nose as she did so, and said, more to herself than to Willets, "Now, we'll see if I don't read it."

"My charming Miss Goodsil, replied Willets, "I prophesy that you will see if you do read it, instead of see if you don't read it."

The spinster observed that it was tarnal fine writing, least ways it appeared so.

"Put on your glasses," suggested the Inimitable.

The letter and both the spinster's hands dropped down to her side. She bent the lustre of her gaze hard at Willets, as if she was debating whether to deny the charge of wearing glasses or to take them out of her pocket and put them on.

The Inimitable divined her thoughts, and anxious to have no scene, observed as a compromise, "that he had seen her wear glasses through the window, and supposed she did yet, unless her second sight was coming on."

"Oh! you horrid man!" said the spinster, "that hotel life will be the ruination of you yet." Saying this she drew out her case and fitted the glasses in a perching position on her nose, read as follows:

"ANCHORVILLE, June 2d, 18—.

"Miss Zurilda Goodsil:

"My dear sister:—Three years ago I wrote you the terrible news of my husband's untimely death by some unknown murderer's hand. I told you the particulars of that awful crime, how he was found bleeding and dead on a car platform. I also told you, dear Zurilda, that it was the hardest blow of my life, and that nothing could be harder, but I now have even a greater cross than that to bear. Little Charlie and Freddie have both been kidnaped away from me. Just think of the little ones being denied a mother's care. I am almost wild. Charlie, the oldest, is only ten years old. I received a letter from some one this morning who pretends to have my children. It is from Cinapolis, and read as follows:

"'Do you want your little boys? If so, come to Cinapolis, and be at the town pump just west of Gibbon's Place, next Sunday evening, between ten and eleven, and bring two thousand dollars. If anybody is with you you can't have them.—O. H.'

"Now, Zurilda, I want to borrow one thousand dollars of you (I have the other thousand), and get my dear children away from this wicked person, whoever he or she is. Let me hear from you at once.

"Affectionately,

"Your sister,

"ANGELINE BETHEL."

"My charming friend," said Willets, "I was well acquainted with Mr. Bethel, your sister's husband, but never knew, thought, or suspicioned until this minute

that Mrs. Bethel was a sister of yours. It was I, Edward Willets, Esq., who sold Mr. Bethel the ticket on which he took his fatal ride. I it was who found his purse and returned it to his bereaved family, and I have always thought that their lamentations and deep-felt sorrow were noticeably lightened by this little act of kindness on my part—no, I don't mean that they felt less sorrowful about Mr. Bethel's death, not that exactly, but then they undoubtedly felt better. And it was also myself who fastened these eyes on the frowsy headed, glistening eyes, bristled face and dirty grinning countenance of the living devil who killed him, and who I suspicion is the abductor of these two little boys. I am no fighter, Miss Goodsil, far from it, nothing of that kind is my make-up, not a jot or tittle of fight in my blood or muscle, but let me give you a pointer," as he said this he wagged his long, big-jointed finger forward and back, as the finger of a butcher's scales performs when different articles are being weighed. "If that old, grinning, murdering, kidnaping devil ever crosses my path, I'll give him the dyspepsia so deucedly bad that his boot-soles will clamor for an outlet through his fangs of teeth."

"Well, what shall I do?" said the spinster, frantically, "I havn't got only about five hundred dollars."

"Write," said Willets, "write at once and tell your charming sister that five hundred dollars is all the ready cash you have on hand, and that you have this day loaned one hundred dollars of that to Edward Willets, Esq., who proposes to go to Cinapolis, and by stratagem follow up O. H., whoever he is, and find her darling little boys, etc."

"Oh, Mr. Willets," said the spinster, smiling through her tears, "your kindness shall never, never be forgotten. My money is at home. Shall I go after it now, or wait until after breakfast?"

"Before breakfast by all means," said the Inimitable, earnestly. "It is far more in keeping with the eternal fitness of things to attend to such small matters as these with the same promptness we would, larger transactions."

"Very well, Mr. Willets, I will go at once and bring

it. But are you quite sure that one hundred dollars is enough?"

"My dear Miss Goodsil, you are no ordinary woman, but you are a very extraordinary person, indeed. I am not really sure that one hundred dollars is enough, and have been thinking so all along, and yet without my saying a word, not a single word, you have divined my thoughts."

"Mr. Willets," said the spinster, "you are so complimentary. I will bring two hundred." With this the bony form of the wrinkled spinster disappeared, and again the Inimitable was left alone. He watched her retreating form through the window by the dewy light of breaking day, until she disappeared at a turn of the road, and then observed that the old adage was certainly a very true one, which says, "That no tramp will ever go away from a good man's door empty-handed; not, that is, if he can reach an overcoat from the hall rack. I tell you, Edward Willets, Esq., you are a brick," said he, rising to his feet and looking in the mirror. "It has been said that a half loaf beats nothing, but if two good full loaves don't beat a loaf and a half then I will lay down and die. How suggestive, sir, are those beautiful lines of Christopher P. Cranch's, where he says that:

'We are spirits clad in veils;
Man by man was never seen,
All our deep communing fails
To remove the shadowy screen.'

You rascal, you, don't you wink at me again like that, sir;—I'll pummel the very life out of you if you repeat that eye-lid act. It has been said, sir, by the tongue of a wise man, Richard Henry Stoddard, I believe, that 'there are gains for all our losses.' Now, I am well satisfied this is true in my case, but how is it with other people with whom I come in contact?

"What! Are you winking again? Oh, you're not; 'tis well, 'tis well. What have you to say for yourself, sir? Find these little boys and return them to their mother? Spoken like a man, my charming fellow. It gives me courage to hear you utter such noble words.

Your ambition, sir, is laudable. Who shall help you in this glorious undertaking? Harry Baine. Correct, sir, correct. Ah! Edward you are a sly dog. You are an automath of the first water, sir. What is an automath? Why, sir, my astonishment knows no bounds at your ignorance. An automath, sir, is a self-made man. I, Edward Willets, Esq., am a self-made man. What is that you say? That I would have had a better job if I had let out the contract?

"You villainous rascal, you insult me beyond endurance. Prepare yourself, sir, for a mortal combat and—ah, Miss Goodsil, back already? You are, indeed, a most extraordinary woman. Swift of thought, swift of foot, and swift of tongue—I beg pardon, I mean, my dear Miss Goodsil, that you are an elegant and entertaining conversationalist."

"Here are two hundred dollars," said the spinster, "and I expect Mr. Willets, I ought to have a note."

Just here her eyes met the Inimitable's, and they gazed steadily at each other in silence for a moment, and then Willets said: "Miss Goodsil!"

This was said in a very hollow, unnatural voice. After another brief pause he repeated in the same graveyard intonation: "Miss Goodsil!"

"I mean, Mr. Willets," said the spinster, apologetically, "that I ought to have a note when dealing with most people, but I wouldn't think of asking you for a note, indeed I wouldn't."

"And, Miss Goodsil, I can assure you on the honor of a gentleman—reduced, to be sure, far below the sphere into which I was born, nevertheless possessed of a poetic soul—that I would not think of giving you my note. Never, Miss Goodsil, never but once in my life did I give my note and it—though nothing but a small piece of paper—was a prominent factor in establishing my reputation in the neighborhood where I then resided.

"It had no sooner completed the job of establishing a reputation for me, when, owing to the wet weather or something else, the black rot set in, in its most malignant form. The upshot of the whole business was, I had to slip away in the darkness which usually occurs be-

tween two days, to prevent this defective reputation from seeing which road I took."

They then talked matters over fully, and when Miss Zurilda arose to go he had her promise to let little Bertha Pembrooke accompany him when he went East to see his sisters.

Although Harry Baine and his friends were rather late in rising, they were destined to find the Inimitable waiting for them in the bar-room. He greeted them with great warmth. First Harry, then old Tim, after which Harry introduced the Inimitable Edward Willets Esq., to Mr. George Tobias—"'Rilia's uncle, of whom I spoke to you at one time," explained Harry.

Willets received the introduction graciously, but not so fluently as Harry expected.

The eyes of mine host, who had inaugurated the pay-in-advance system on poor Willets, was resting in a half-shut, blinking way on the group, of which fact the Inimitable was well aware. He gave Harry a wink just as the landlord observed that "the gentlemen will find breakfast waiting them in the dining room."

Whether this was meant to include or exclude Mr. Willets, no one knew.

Willets repeated the eye-lid act at Harry, and walked up to the counter and said:

"Mr. Scudmore, you, sir, are the landlord of this institution. An institution, sir, that has inaugurated a system that is oppressive in the extreme. I allude, sir, to your pay-in-advance scheme. Do you, sir, still insist on the rule being obeyed?"

The landlord saw that it was either a clear backdown on his part or a fight, in words at least, for his dignity. He chose the latter, and after filling his lungs as full of air as was possible, he said in a slow, deep voice, "Yes, sir, in your case, I emphatically do insist on the rule being complied with."

Harry made a move to say something, but the Inimitable's long arm was raised gently in the attitude of admonition, and he said, as he turned his face toward Harry:

"*Silentio! Silentio!* Be calm, my friends, be calm!"

Then turning to the—by this time—red-faced landlord, he said: "Take your change out of this small piece of paper, sir, and be satisfied, thou greedy son of Shylock."

Saying this he threw down a crisp one-hundred-dollar bank note, that the spinster had that very morning given him, at the same time exposing to the landlord's sight a large roll of bills of smaller denomination. Howbeit, he observed to mine host that the one-hundred-dollar bill was the smallest change he had with him.

Now, this landlord had a weakness,—perhaps the nature of his weakness can already be guessed—money was his God. Any man who had more money than himself he regarded as his superior, and whomsoever was poorer than himself was his inferior.

A hundred-dollar bill! It was too much. It was his master. It was greater than he. It mellowed him, and had Willets thumped Mr. Scudmore as he might have thumped a watermelon, he would have found him lusciously ripe.

He first grinned and simpered, then blushed and coughed, after which he said he couldn't make change for such a large bill, and moreover didn't mean to have him pay at all, that the pay-in-advance rule was broken.

They then went into breakfast, and enjoyed the hot rolls, broiled beefsteak and hot coffee greatly.

Immediately after breakfast the Inimitable and Harry withdrew to Burt Lester's room. They found the detective had just awakened and was feeling greatly refreshed. After Harry had ordered some buttered toast, a thin slice of hot broiled steak and a cup of Java coffee sent up, he sat down near the bed and watched Burt eat his breakfast, enjoying it quite as much as he had his own.

Willets told them all about his interview with Zurilda Goodsil that morning, not even forgetting to tell them of the two hundred dollars expense money. He also told Harry that he had succeeded in getting the spinster's consent for little Bertha to accompany him on his visit to see his sisters.

It was agreed that Harry Baine should personify, with woman's attire, Mrs. Bethel, and be at the town pump just west of "Gibbon's Place" the following Sunday evening, and see if he could learn anything concerning the missing boys.

They then took leave of Willets, and at noon that day Burt Lester was comfortably quartered in the Pullman car of the Cinapolis bound train with his three companions, old Tim, George Tobias, and his faithful friend, Harry Baine.

Old Tim and Harry held a long conversation by themselves, in such a low tone that no one could hear what they said: but one thing was evident, old Tim was satisfied of Edward Willets' identity, and was positive beyond a doubt that he was his sister Emily's son.

The train arrived at Cinapolis late at night time. The usual number of strong-lunged, hard-cheeked and greedy-for-patronage hackmen were in waiting, ready to all talk at once like so many quacking, gibble-gabbling fowls.

A barouche was selected, and after Burt and his companions were comfortably stowed away, the number and street of Mr. Daniel Lester's residence was given to the driver.

Burt declared he felt almost well, while old Tim was well-nigh beside himself in happy anticipation of meeting the sister whom he had not seen for so many years.

Would not Mrs. Lester feel proud of her son for having at last accomplished the object of his life's search? True, he comes home in a disabled condition, but time will cure his wounds.

When he left home years before, he was only a child, but his mother's love during all these intervening years of a detective's life had stimulated him.

Now he was returning home in company with the man whom his mother sent him into the world to find. Returning home, but now a man in years in experience, in hardships, in everything.

The chubby-faeed boy of earlier years whose image was so indelibly stamped on his mother's vision, was no more. No—that rosy-faced, silken-curled boy slipped

out at the front gate, carrying his mother's blessing, and away into the big world. He was the mother's first-born, he was her pride. But the boy who went away so long ago kept getting farther and farther away, so slowly, so gradually, that the mother hardly knew when he was gone.

He grew away from her. So it is with the mothers and their babes all over the land. The fond, kind-hearted mother lets her baby boy go out into the busy activities of a pushing, heartless world.

With the ebb and flow of years he is drifted far away. The tide of time brings him back to her some day an eager, restless, ambitious man.

Ah, where is her baby boy now? He is as completely lost to her as if he slept in that quiet city of the dead, all steepled over with shafts of marble and granite.

Who can tell where the baby went? He has gone away somewhere, and lost himself in the sheets of gathering mist, and the longing mother's eyes will never see him again. The mist is too dense. To her the rosy-cheeked boy is forevermore only a flitting phantom.

But the love that filled her soul when first the little form was laid upon her breast will never be lost. It is the deathless lamp, the beacon of hope that burns at the shrine of her affections, and lights the wayward, straying feet of her boy back to her again when all the world is cold and dark and dreary to him.

After all, there is nothing quite like a mother's love. No matter how much we err and go astray, no matter how deep the depths to which we sink; no matter how dark the frown society turns upon us, a mother's love will never fail. In life's storm or sunshine, life's victory or defeat, life's darkness or light—unfalteringly we turn to lay our weary heads gently down upon the bosom that gave us life.

CHAPTER XXVII.

OLD HINCHEY FOLLOWED TO HIS DEN IN "GIBBON'S PLACE."

ON the very night that Harry Baine and his companions came to Hampton from the Mills, old Hinchey arrived by rail.

Lin Brinkerhoff, as we have seen, had quite an intimate acquaintanceship with C. McGuffin, and through him had become acquainted with old Hinchey.

In truth it may be said that McGuffin was greatly displeased at this acquaintanceship, but the old 'Possum had requested it, and such were the toils that encompassed McGuffin about, that he was unable to do aught else than permit it.

It is not to be supposed that Lin knew what sort of a person his grinning old acquaintance was, but entertained a similar respect for him that he did for the Phenomenal McGuffin.

On the very evening that Harry Baine and the old postmaster were conversing with Edward Willets in the depot, the old 'Possum, through Lin Brinkerhoff's assistance, secured a conveyance and started for the Mills.

We can well imagine with what success his trip was attended. Nor can there be any question as to the statement he would make to Harlan Barretson about how he had dispatched Timothy Mannahan.

Thus the wheel turned on until the old town clock of Cinapolis sounded out the hour of ten o'clock, on the very evening set apart from all other evenings for Mrs. Bethel to learn news of her children.

The letter she had received said "between ten and eleven o'clock," at the town pump just west of "Gibbon's Place." As the last stroke of the old clock sounded, a figure, attired in a woman's garb, came slowly along the street toward the well. When she came opposite, she stopped and seated herself on the curb, as if weary with long walking.

The evening was very pleasant, and the full moon was just looking over the eastern horizon, and taking a long side-way glance up the streets and alleys that happened to run parallel toward its coming up place. Up the street came its mellow light past "Gibbon's Place" and many another deserted store-room along that connecting thoroughfare, and fell full on the figure seated on the well curb.

What sort of a face is this we see? Frowsy hair dangled over the flushed cheeks, and a general look of dissipation is plainly discernible. Perhaps it's too much drink that caused her to stop and rest. Presently an old bent-over man, with a cloak that almost completely hides his face, came slowly up the street with a water pitcher in his hand. By the time the old man reaches the well the woman on the curb is getting very sleepy. She nods and nods, and then starts up suddenly as if from a sleep. Just as the old man fills his pitcher, the woman takes a black bottle from her pocket, drinks a long draught, and then brokenly says: "Go-od, (hic) mi-g-ht-y go-od."

Then the old man stoops down and shakes the woman's shoulder gently, and says, "Does the good woman want to see some one?"

"N-o, (hic) I am a-go-hing (hic) do-wn the ri-ver, I a-m, (hic)."

"Has the good woman," said the old man, with great urbanity, "any money she is afraid of losing!"

"I-, I-, g-o-t- n-o mo-ney (hic), give me so-me (hic)."

Saying this she staggered to her feet and continued to announce that she was "go-in (hic) to th-e ri-ver (hic)."

In one hand the old man held the pitcher of water and with the other he held fast to his cloak. He did not venture another word, but followed the drunken woman as she staggered off down past "Gibbon's Place;" he followed no further than the alley.

A thin mist of cloud had spread itself like magic over the arched dome of the heavens, and shut out the light of the sentinel stars. Below the clouds and above the eastern horizon a narrow strip of sky could be seen, which

was a good back-ground for the fire-red moon, so large and seemingly so near. Soon the moon climbed up out of the clear field of sky and buried itself in the inky folds of clouds that were getting thicker and darker and darker and thicker.

A melancholy wind blew up a little, as if it could no longer hold its breath in suspense, but must expand its force and give vent to its pent-up feelings by coming down and watching the scene.

Presently old Hinchey turned down the alley, muttering as he did so, "Good luck for you, old Hinchey; the wind is coming on. The harder the wind blows the more winning it is. Safes can be cracked, windows broken open and locks smashed, when the good old wind is blowing and roaring like a mad beast. Ah, those hard blows are winning winds for me." Just as he turned down into the basement two dark figures crept cautiously down the steps after him. One was the drunken woman, and the other a figure in man's apparel.

Old Hinchey thought to carry the pitcher of water into his miserable apartments and then return to the town pump. He was greatly in hopes that Mrs. Bethel would come for her little boys. His last few weeks' work had quite spoiled him for small transactions.

He felt it would be quite a come-down to go into the silk handkerchief-stealing business again, since he had been doing so well lately with big contracts. He passed into the inner room, leaving all the doors behind him unlocked, and as he struck a match he thought how business-like it would be if the law of the land would permit him to have an advertisement something like this—

"Working people off a specialty. Five thousand dollars per head. Address. O. H., Care of Herald Office."

The match went out as he was reaching it to the candle, and another had to be lit, and another and another. Finally, he succeeded in lighting the sputtering candle just as the old town clock struck the hour of eleven.

"So late as that," cried Hinchey, "I must be——"

Before he could finish the sentence, the candle was blown out, and the next thing old Hinchey knew or

could comprehend, his arms were bound to his sides with a strong rope noose that had been thrown over his head.

"There," said a voice between clinched teeth, "we have got you."

"Oh!" said Hinchey, struggling desperately to free himself, "what does this mean? It is a mistake. It is, it is."

"You cry out again like that, you old villain," said a suppressed voice close to his ear, "and I will pull the trigger to this little piece of cold steel, the muzzle of which I will just rub against your forehead so that you may know she is in readiness."

While this conversation was going on, the hands of another strong man were busily engaged in tying and retying, with strong rough cord, old Hinchey's hands behind him, and witheing his arms as fast to his sides and his feet as close together, as if they had been in a vise.

He moved, or rather tried to move his arms ever so little, but was powerless. The cords cut into his wrists and impeded the circulation.

"Have mercy on me," old Hinchey called out, unable to keep still another moment.

The hot breath of his captor and the cold muzzle of steel were felt by him at the same time on his forehead, and a hissing voice said: "Call out that way just once more, and short work will be made of you."

The blue point of a match was then scratched into a quick blaze, and the candle relit. Its fitful blaze as it flared up lit the damp basement, which seemed to be a well patronized storehouse for foul air.

Hinchey was suffering excruciating pain from the thongs, which sank deep into his flesh. He was faint with fear and almost dumbfounded with bewilderment.

For many years he had been a cruel master in villainous deeds, but this was the first time he ever took the part of the bound slave since he was released from penitentiary, years ago. The threat to take his life fairly rang in his ears, and he was conscious that the threat could be very easily executed.

"Blowing winds are always 'winning winds' for me," said a voice, just as the light burned up, so he could see plainly.

Old Hinchey turned and confronted his former slave, Richard Tobias—alias Dick Dare—and at his side stood the drunken woman whom Hinchey a short time before had seen first at the town pump, and later go reeling and staggering away down the street. He then realized that he was the victim of a skillfully laid trap.

The two little boys, or rather the two skeletons, came up just then and begged for a crust of bread.

"Is this Charlie and Freddie Bethel?" asked the man in woman's attire, who was none other than Harry Baine.

"Yes, sir," lisped out the little boys together, and both their weak voices as they blended in one seemed so exhausted that they were hardly audible.

Then, turning to the old villain, Harry said in a deep, triumphant voice: "Old Hinchey, I've got you at last."

The old man groaned for an answer, and closed his restless eyes to shut out the sight of his captors. The ghastly grin was dethroned from his greasy, dirty countenance, and his thin lips tightly pressed over his snags of teeth.

Finally, starting up, he said in a low, whimpering voice:

"Oh, sir, pity an old man. You know, Dick," said he, turning to Richard, "that I was always kind to you; gave you plenty of spending money and a home. Oh, my, oh, my, what will become of me?"

"Yes," said Richard, "you took me from a home, although a miserable one, yet it was richly furnished with honest and good intentions, and led me to a den of thieves of whom you were chief, and caused me to make my home among them. You gave me spending money in the shape of King Alcohol, who stole my judgment, my self-respect, my belief in a God, my manhood, and dulled the pain at my heart for a time, and made me your abject slave. When I tried to lead an honest life

you sought me out from among honest men, and labeled me with my former shortcomings."

"Unbind me, gentlemen, my dear, dear gentlemen, and I will confess everything and go away from here forever."

"Yes," replied Harry, "we will unbind you,—but not until these thongs have chains to take their place." Then turning to Richard he said:

"You take those starving boys to Burt, and he will tell you what to do, and I will quarter this fiend incarnate in the inner stocks of the strongest Cinapolis' bridewell."

Richard at once took up the half-famished boys, one on either arm, and after groping his way to the street, hurried on toward Daniel Lester's residence.

After Harry had untied his feet, he told old Hinchey to face about and lead the way to the street.

"Oh, my dear, good friend," said Hinchey, in a pleading tone, "give me my liberty, and I will make you rich, oh, so rich!"

"Do you think, you abominable old villain," said Harry, angrily, "that you can bribe me to give you your liberty?"

"Don't call me such hard names," whimpered Hinchey, "I never did you any harm, or anybody else,—you mistake me for some other man."

"I think I know some few pages of your history, old man," said Harry, in his most scathing manner. "Who was it, sir," he continued, "that blackened Leroy Pembrooke's life? Who was it, sir, that murdered Mr. Bethel a few short years ago, and now steals these two babes away from the widowed mother? Who was it that stole fourteen thousand dollars at the Hampton depot, last November? Who was it that kidnaped little Penfield Pembrooke, and tried to blacken his young life? Who was it, sir, that attempted to murder George Tobias on the cliff in your brother's pasture, and did succeed in throwing him and Burt Lester over the slide?"

"Was that Burt Lester, the detective?" shouted the old man, almost frantically. "Oh," he shrieked between his clinched teeth, "that I had killed him! But," he

continued, calming a little, "I never stole fourteen thousand dollars from a depot or any other place."

Harry cocked his revolver and placed the muzzle at the old man's head, and in a calm, steel-toned voice said, "Lead on, and no bad breaks, or I will get nervous."

Hinchey yielded to this persuasive style of argument, walked slowly out through the basement, and climbed the stairway, closely followed by Harry. Just as they came from the alley out into the street they met a tall, strongly-built man, who, from the way he looked up, was intending to turn down into the very alley they had emerged from.

Old Hinchey gave a significant groan as they passed this Goliath-looking stranger, and the next thing Harry knew he saw a great many stars, notwithstanding the cloudy weather. The second thing he knew, Emily Willets was bending tenderly over him, bathing with ice-water an ugly gash he had received across the head.

When he first opened his eyes, he was too indifferent to care where he was and too weak to make any effort to find out, had he cared, but presently the little soft hand, that was engaged in smoothing back his hair, was taken away, and then he looked up to see where it had gone to, and found it was employed in wiping the tears that would gather in beautiful Emily Willets's eyes.

They were not so dimmed, however, as not to quickly discover that Harry had awakened out of his slumber. He raised one of his hands up toward her, and she bent down to listen to what he might say, but Harry did not seem inclined to talk, but gently soothed back the golden tresses of Emily's rich, wavy hair.

"You are feeling better, are you not?" she said, in a low musical voice.

"Much better, thank you," replied Harry. "Tell me where I am, how long since I came here, and where is old Hinchey? Where is Richard?"

"Oh, you are asking so many questions," replied Emily gently, while a happy smile flitted like a sunbeam over her fair face. "You are at Mr. Dorris's," she went on, in a low, soothing voice, "and you have been here three days. No one knows where old Hinchey is, and

Richard is at work as usual at the foundry. There, there, now you mustn't tell anyone I have been talking to you," she said, smilingly ; "the doctor gave orders that you must be kept quiet." As she remarked this, she poured out a potion of medicine from a vial, and said, "It is time for you to take this."

The medicine was taken, and soon a drowsiness came stealing on, finally wrapping him in its restful embrace.

When he awoke again, it was with a sensation of having had a most blissful rest, far better than any ordinary sleep he ever remembered having. Presently he remembered that he had had a very unpleasant dream. He dreamed that old Hinchey had him a prisoner in a dungeon room, where he lay burning up with a fever. The bed was like a pan of coals, uneasy and tiring, while day after day he had been tormented with a fierce and unquenchable thirst. The weary, restless shiftings of his body kept pace with the ceaseless wandering of his mind up and down the long corridors of anxiety—a dim remembrance of something having been left in an unfinished state. Thus he was continually haunted by dim and shadowy phantoms, that filled his memory with one long, unbroken chain of regrets. But it was only a dream ; now he was awake, and he felt so half unconsciously happy.

Was it a dream or a reality that Emily had stood beside him when he was awake before? He closed his eyes to study the matter over, and just as he did so he felt a hand laid gently on his forehand. He looked quickly up, and there stood dear old Burt Lester.

"Oh Burt!" said Harry, and straightway lifted his hand up toward him, but it seemed so very heavy ; it almost exhausted him to lift his own arm, yet when he looked at it he discovered it was wondrous white and very long and slim ; so much so, that he could count the very bones of his hand, and trace the course of the blue veins.

"Old boy," Burt was saying, "the tables are turned, —I am taking care of you, instead of you me."

"How long," asked Harry, "since I came here?"

"Just three weeks and three days," said Burt, as cheerfully as it was possible for him to speak.

Harry lay perfectly quiet with closed eyes for a little while, letting his thoughts ramble as they would. Finally, he summoned strength to ask, "Where is Emily?"

"Here I am," said a sweet, rich voice, as she came to the bedside and took up his poor shriveled hand in hers.

"Did you not tell me," asked Harry, "that it was three days since I came here?"

"Yes, I did," said Emily, in a soothing, gentle way, "and that was true, then, but that was a good many days ago."

"Three weeks ago!" said Harry.

Emily looked up at Burt Lester, who nodded and said, "I told him."

Harry closed his eyes again, and a smile flitted over his sunken cheeks and high cheek-bones, and gently parted his thin blue lips.

"What is it, old boy?" asked Burt, almost affectionately.

"First, three days," said Harry, "then three weeks. Don't let me go to sleep again, or I won't know anything for three months." They laughed at his wit, and repeated it to every member of the household, who also smiled, as they said, "He is getting better." Yes, this was the commencement of Harry's getting better.

The long run of fever was broken up, and day by day he felt his strength coming to him. Burt or Emily was constantly by his side, and he told the former one day, in great confidence, that Emily's very presence did him more good than all the vials of medicine on the table which stood near his bed.

Burt told him how the little wisps of boys he and Richard had so bravely rescued, improved and grew quite strong, and that "Mrs. Bethel came the next day after they were rescued, and remained a couple of weeks, and Tobs, or I should say, Uncle George Tobias, got so interested in the little boys that he accompanied the widow home. Little Pen also went home with them. He is an own cousin to these little boys, Mrs. Bethel being his mother's sister. We all think," said Burt, smiling, "that it was the widow as well as the little boys that Uncle George is so taken with."

"What about old Hinchey?" asked Harry.

"No one knows aught of him," replied Burt, "nor the large man who was with him. Richard got back to 'Gibbon's Place' just as you were felled to the ground, and he rushed up to where you lay, screaming for help with all his strength, and succeeded in scaring the large man and old Hinchey away. They turned down into the alley, and that was the last seen or heard of them. Now, old friend," Burt went on, "you are getting to feel pretty strong, and I want to tell you about those who have been here ever since a few days after you were hurt."

"Who?" said Harry, impatiently.

"Well," replied Burt, "before I tell you I must have your promise that you will not let it excite you a particle."

"I promise," said Harry, "tell me who is here,—my father?"

"Yes, and your mother."

Thus Harry's convalescent days wore on, and it was not until the glorious Fourth of July that he was able to dress and accompany Emily Willets on morning walks and evening strolls. Then, and in such company, the morning and evening chased each other rapidly on, and the days fled by, and others came, one upon another. One upon another they heaped like the rolling waves of the sea, and with each ebb and flow of the swelling, retreating tide he grew stronger and happier, and for a time was rocked in the cradle of blissful contentment.

But after awhile the waves rippled and broke, then swung their white mariner caps above their heads, and huzzaed in the loudest, splashing, mad-capped way possible, and all their cry, clear along the rocky beach, was—

"Bro-ken wa-ves, bro-ken wa-ves, broken wa-ves."

Presently the mist rose up from the waters a little and a tiny boat was seen with its anchor securely cast, and where the white sail should have been, Emily Willets's gentle face could be dimly seen, and her sweet voice faintly heard as it blended and became a part of the oceans song:

"Bro-ken-wa-ves, bro-ken wa-ves, bro-ken wa-ves."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE NEW ENGLAND HOME.

AT Cinapolis it is sultry July, with an occasional cool morning or evening. Harry Baine's parents have returned home to Dairyfield Farm, as he is now convalescent.

Give us your hand, dear reader, and we will travel on the wings of thought to other scenes, also travel backward in time to the budding, blossoming month of May. Nothing equals the speed of our conveyance, "thought." Let us turn our faces New Englandward, to an old, rustic, country home. It is the home of Penfield Pembrooke, Sr. Here Leroy Pembrooke, in years agone, was wont to romp and play in boyish glee, The brown stone house, with its massive oaken doors, is situated on a rise of ground. A beautiful grassy lawn stretches slopingly down to the highway in front. To the left we see the well-trimmed shade trees, and a little further on the vineyard, and then comes the old New England orchard. To the right of the buildings we see a bushy row of cherry trees, with numerous rockeries here and there. Evergreens are tastefully arranged through the wide lawn in front. Just beyond the row of cherry trees the earth seems to have been abruptly broken off, and for fully fifty feet, almost straight down, nothing but gray rocks can be seen, with an occasional mountain evergreen growing from out some narrow crevice.

A winding flight of just even one hundred steps leads down to the water's edge of the little stream that prattles on and on, the same to-day as it did a century ago.

It is fed by numerous springs, and its waters are always fresh and cold. Just to the left of this rocky stairway, and a little above the water's level in the gurgling, zig-zag stream, is a beautiful terrace opening. At the back of this terrace, a smooth boulder rock rises,

almost perpendicular, many feet high, while above and below it is thickly overhung with boughs and shrubbery. At the base of the large boulder a pretty little spring bubbles forth. A basin has been hewn in the rocky floor. Two rustic seats adorn the terrace, and, in the summer time, pots of vines and blooming fragrant flowers. It wears a mingled look of romance, beauty, and delightful seclusion.

The time is blue-eyed May, the carnival month in twelve. The old earth has yawned and stretched, and is at last fully awake and clothed with a carpet of verdure, and enameled with fragrant flowers of every hue.

The numerous fruit trees here and there have more the appearance of white banks of snow than aught else, and the air is ladened with a thousand delightful odors. The sun is low in the western sky, and the evening breeze, as it ripples gently through the tree tops, shakes down the ripened blossoms in snowy showers.

Kittie Pembrooke and 'Rilla Tobias have just returned home from Mr. Stephen Baine's where they have been visiting all winter.

The old man, Grandfather Pembrooke, was overjoyed to see his pets, as he was wont to call them, but a shade of sadness, in furrows more deep than any that had marked his wrinkled face since his wife had died years before, gathered on his brow this evening.

"Come to my side, Kittie," the old man says, and quickly her lithe figure is standing by the old man's easy chair. One of her hands rested gently on his shoulder, and the other was smoothing back confidingly the hoary locks from his forehead.

"Do you think, Kittie," he asks, "that little Pen will ever be found, or do you think he is dead? Tell me the truth, Kittie, for I must know."

"I am sure, Grandfather," she replies, "that he is alive, and will come home to us some day. Harry Baine is searching for him, and I am quite certain he will be successful."

"Oh Grandfather!" cries 'Rilla, as she comes running out to the shady plot of mossy grass where they are

sitting, "why didn't you send my letters to me? Here are two letters from Mr. Willets, and one from his sister, Emily, bless her."

"Why don't you say," inquired Kittie, mischieviously, "bless Mr. Willets, too?"

"I really forgot, child," the old man replies, "to send the letters. My memory is no account any more."

"It is all right, grandfather," says 'Rilla, "it is indeed, I was only—"

"Only wanted," interrupted Kittie,—and at the same time nudging the old man,—"to let us know that she had a letter from Mr. Willets," and then the two young ladies broke into a merry, rippling laugh, in which even the old man partially participated.

"I'll tell you, 'Rilla," he said, "if Mr. Willets would forget the likes of you in so short a time, then indeed he is not worthy of you."

"What does Emily say?" asked Kittie, then innocently added, "I know well enough what Mr. Willets says."

"Really, Kittie, I haven't read her letter yet," 'Rilla answers blushingly,—just as if she had no business to read the other letters first,—"but I will read it at once," she quickly added. "Now, quit your laughing, you tormenting elf, or I will tell grandfather all about Burt Lester."

"Laughing," repeats mischievous Kittie, "I am not laughing, am I, grandfather? I am as sedate and sober as a priest."

'Rilla opened the letter, and proceeded to read it aloud:

"CINAPOLIS, May 1st, 18—.

"Dear 'Rilla:—I have not heard from you, it seems, for ages. My school closes the middle of next month, and then I am coming to visit with you, whether you want me to or not. I promised brother Edward that I would meet him at the train the morning of the sixteenth, and accompany him to a New England home. You, perhaps, can guess where that home is. Tell Kittie that I know all about Burt Lester, but I must never,

never tell how I found out, ha! ha!! I fear your curiosity would not be appeased any if I should tell you that I have met my fate, and he told me. I have never seen Grandfather Pembrooke, of course, but tell him that I learned to think a great deal of him while listening to your own and Kittie's ceaseless praise of him while at school, and that I shall insist on the right to call him grandfather. I wonder if this don't sound something like woman's rights? Tell him also that I have a surprise for him, a double one; and as for you, 'Rilla, you precious girl, you will surely bless my coming. Oh! I want to see you and Kittie so badly. I sometimes wonder if you care as much for my own little simple self as I do for you. Am I coming sure? Well, you will find out just as soon after the sixteenth of next month as the cars can bring us. Until then, good-by.

"Affectionately yours,
"EMILY WILLETS."

Kittie's usual way of giving vent to happy feelings was to hug and kiss somebody awful hard, and as she was almost too jubilant to talk, she at once set to work, embracing first her grandfather and then 'Rilla in real downright earnestness.

"Won't it be grand!" she exclaimed, "and then to think, grandfather, she is going to give you a big surprise. I do wonder what sort of a present it will be, and you, dear 'Rilla, 'will bless her coming.' Those are her words, but," Kittie added in rather a thoughtful mood, "she didn't say that she would bring me anything."

"Never mind, Kittie," said 'Rilla, "whatever she brings me I will give you half of."

"Except Mr. Willets," said Kittie, and then her old merry laugh rang out again.

"She is not," retorted 'Rilla, "going to bring Mr. Willets—he is a going to bring himself."

The intervening days were busy ones at Grandfather Pembrooke's, getting ready for Emily Willets and her brother. The sweetest apples are soonest eaten, and the shady drive too soon ended; so, also, was it with the

month of budding May. It wore itself away, and June commenced slowly unwinding its thirty reels. The time was drawing near when the letter said they would come, but, instead, another missive came from Emily, which read as follows :

"CINAPOLIS, June 15th.

"Dear Rilla :—I know you will be disappointed, and perhaps half vexed, because of our not coming when my other letter said we would. But, oh, if you knew how miserably unhappy I have been, occasioned by the sickness of some very dear friends, I know I should have your full pardon and sympathy. Rest assured we will come just as soon as possible. I have written to brother Edward not to take his vacation yet awhile. I am almost wornout with anxiety and loss of sleep. Good-by.

"Affectionately yours,

"EMILY WILLETS."

This letter the reader can understand much better than it was understood at Grandfather Pembrooke's home.

On a clear bright morning, about one month later, a happy party boarded the train at Cinapolis, bound for Grandfather Pembrooke's New England home. They were Edward Willets and his sister, Emily, who carefully cared for little Bertha Pembrooke, Harry Baine, and Burt Lester, Uncle George Tobias, and old Tim Mannahan, Richard and little Pen. On the afternoon of the second day this party reached the little station of Greenwood.

Richard Tobias was the only one of the party who was acquainted there. The very hills that stretched away like gently rolling waves from the little village station, seemed like old friends to him. Here he had wandered when a boy, in search of flowers in the springtime, and later gathered wild plums and golden-rod from numerous groves and thickets. These were the hills that he thirsted to be divorced from, that he might learn the world. Oh, that it had ever remained a stranger to him !

The party made their way to the hotel parlors, which

were on the second floor. The window doors opened out on a large portico. Here they assembled. "One mile," said Richard, "over yonder rise of ground is dear old Grandfather Pembrooke's." He said no more, but bowed his head upon his arm. It was arranged that Edward and Emily Willets, with little Bertha, should drive out, taking Richard and Pen with them

Accordingly a carriage was brought round, and they set out for a short drive over a stretch of road that was so old and familiar to Richard. Presently they heard a sob, and looking round found Pen in tears. On being asked why he was crying, Pen said he did not know nor could he tell all he felt and thought when riding thus for the first time over his poor papa's childhood haunts. Thinking of his poor father's past and his own present, what he had been and what he was now, the thorny paths of loneliness he had trod and his present great happiness, all seemed blending like the glorious colors of the rainbow into a wreath of inexplainable happiness, and he could not keep from crying. "Then," he went on, "I promised my father when he lay on his deathbed that I would one day come and bring this darling little, chubby-faced, sister Bertha to grandfather's. He told me to name her Bertha, and Kittie would tell me why." After this he grew thoughtful and silent, and no one ventured to break the silence of little Pen's reverie.

While they are driving slowly along, and the slanting shadows of the afternoon sun are growing longer and longer, it might be well to explain that neither Edward nor Emily Willets had yet been informed that their mother was an own sister to Mrs. Daniel Lester and Timothy Mannahan. This was a secret that old Tim and our two detective friends alone knew.

"Ah, there is the old farm house," cried Richard, as they came to a turn in the road. Yes, there it was, and there in the shady yard sat an old white-haired man, and on either side of him on low ottomans were seated 'Rilla and Kittie.

The carriage draws up at the front gate, and soon the frisky horses are made fast to the hitching post, and our friends have climbed out and are walking slowly up the graveled walk, Richard and little Pen behind.

"Oh, it's Emily!" shouts 'Rilla, "and she has a baby!" Then both 'Rilla and Kittie meet and warmly embrace Emily and the little child. 'Rilla extends her hand to Mr. Willets, and assures him that she is indeed most happy at his coming. Kittie is then presented.

By this time they are back to where Grandfather Pembrooke is seated. Richard and Pen are standing side by side a little apart watching the happy meeting.

Emily says "grandfather" to old Mr. Pembrooke, just as she said she would in her letter. Richard then stepped forward, and reaching out his arm to 'Rilla, with great emotion said, "My sister, have you forgotten me?"

"Oh! it's Richard," cried 'Rilla and Kittie in one voice, and in a moment more he was almost smothered with embraces. Old Grandfather Pembrooke tremblingly takes Richard's hand, while tears coursed their way down his furrowed cheeks, and lost themselves in his gray beard. "There is," said he, "more joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over the ninety and nine that go not astray." "Richard, my dear boy," the old man continued, "why did you not come back to me years ago? I do not wish to chastise you, Richard, but I must repeat the words I whispered to you when you left this home for the last time, years, long years ago. I never have forgotten them, but have often wondered if you still remembered. These were my words when I took this same hand in mine at parting; I said, 'Richard, my boy, you are ambitious, but your ambition may cause you to bite the dust at your feet. Your proud associates may change to polluted creatures. Your warmest, fawning, flattering friends be transformed into villainous, treacherous enemies. When that time comes, Richard,' said I, 'if it ever does come, do not let your manhood melt away like the morning dew before the sun, but turn from all the false colors and disappointments of the world and come back to Grandfather Pembrooke.' Those were my words, and at last, thank God, you have come! Ah, Richard, it is never too late to do right. You know how lenient I have always been to the memory of my only child, Leroy. I never sought out

his shortcomings like a jealous enemy, as some fathers do, but rather looked over his errors and explained them away, and thought of his nobleness rather than any defects he may have had."

Richard took a low seat by the old man's side, and wept like a child. He raised his hand toward little Pen, and tried to speak, but could not. After a moment's pause, the little fellow stepped forward, and as he did so, the shimmering rays of the setting sun lit his pale face with a halo of light.

"Leroy Pembrooke," said he, "was my father. I know his history. The world attempted to turn from him, and he, proud, noble man that he was, shook it off and it fell away, leaving him standing alone. He then sought the seclusion of a quiet retreat and listened alone to the melancholy sighing of the winds. He was still a proud man, and had no idea of ever seeking a companion for his misery. Nor ever did he. He married again, but she, my mother, never knew aught of his other, his former life.

"On his deathbed, after my mother's lamp had forever gone out, he drew me to his side and told me of you, dear grandfather, for whom I was named, and requested that I name this infant babe, that would be left likewise an orphan, 'Bertha,' and said my older sister Kittie would one day tell me why. Ay, he told me more,—he told me to embrace with all my young heart my dead mother's faith in the Bible, and seek not after a religion based on philosophy. He said to me then that he was going,—going, he knew not whither. The way was dark,—dark,—he could not see, but he was going, and said that before the evening of that day, on which he told me this, came on, he would be no more. He then buried his face in the pillows of his bed and wept. At least I thought he was weeping, until I touched his brow, and found 'twas cold,—then I knew he was dead."

When Pen had finished speaking, he came close to Grandfather Pembrooke's side, and laid his head on the old man's breast.

The old man encircled the sobbing boy's waist with

one arm and gently rested his other hand on his silken head. Then, in a slow, tremulous voice, said, "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge."

The happiness of this reunion was not disturbed by breaking up until long after the eastward shadows of tall trees and shrubbery, here and there, had blended together in the shade of nightfall, and the moon climbed up among the stars, and caused long shadows here and there to fall westward.

Kittie took charge of little Bertha, and divided her time in kissing the little chubby-faced girl, hugging her brother Pen, and making every one feel perfectly at home.

Zurilda Goodsil was in due time informed of the new situation of affairs.

A few days after this, grandfather gave a dinner in honor of the occasion, and when all the guests were gathered around the table the old man opened his Bible and read the parable of the two sons—how the fatted calf was killed when the erring one returned.

After the repast was over, little Pen withdrew and crept down the flight of one hundred steps to the shady terrace. His light feet made no noise, and when he came well down the steps he heard the familiar voice of Edward Willets.

Pen drew near, and looked in the terrace, and there stood the Inimitable facing the large boulder rock. He was in a speech-making attitude, but in some way had got to a point over which his usually vivid imagination refused to carry him.

"Am I intruding, Mr. Willets?" asked Pen.

The Inimitable turned about quickly, and said glowingly, "No, my charming friend, no. In fact, I am deucedly glad you came. On the honor of a *born* gentleman I am. You will observe," Willets went on, "that I emphasize the word 'born,' instead of the word 'gentleman.' Why do I do this? Simply because I was left by my highly respectable parents a lone and lonesome orphan in the tender days of my infancy, as it were. Precipitated out of a lap of luxury, where I

ruled supreme as a pet, into the cold, practical world, and that, too, at the very tenderest period of my earthly existence. Thrown recklessly and uncaringly out on the mercies and ruins of a financial wreck, that my father —sensitive man that he was—died to escape the sight of. Excuse me, my charming Pen, for doing all the talking, but I must not stop at this point in my narrative. No, I must say to you, sir, that I then and there turned my back on financial disaster, determined to run away from all the miseries and aggravating inconveniences that follow in its wake. But, sir, poverty is a deucedly hard thing for a poor man. and especially a poor orphan, to run away from. It increases or slackens its speed to accommodate yours. This I have learned by sad experience. As I before observed, I turned my back on this wreck and ruin and squarely faced the world, but financial difficulties and the annoying inconveniences naturally arising therefrom, has ever bee[illegible] the lot of the orphan, Edward Willets, Esq. It has ever been close upon my heels, and on divers occasions has well nigh tripped me up. In short, sir, financial difficulties and pecuniary embarrassments have ever been my besetting sin."

"Are you in need of any money now?" asked Pen.

"No, my charming young sympathiser, no," replied Willets, "for once in my life, sir, I can truthfully say that I have abundance of filthy lucre in my pocket. The fact is I have a job on hand that must be attended to this very evening, and I am just giving my mind a turn around the race track to get it limbered up, as it were. Yes, to-night, my charming boy, by the silver light of the rising moon, I propose to propose. In other words, she in whom I hold thirty dollars of paid-up stock shall have an opportunity to accept or reject my hand, my heart and my fortune."

"Your fortune, Mr. Willets?" said Pen. "I thought you told me you were poor."

"And so I am, just at the immediate present," answered the Inimitable; "pecuniary embarrassments in the shape of unpaid bills are liable to flock around me any moment like buzzards, and shut out the beaming

rays of happiness, but for all that I have a fortune. Hush! It is a secret."

"Where is it, Mr. Willets?" asked Pen.

"In perspective," answered the Inimitable, while he shut one eye and looked beamingly and confidentially at Pen, with the other. "Yes," said Willets, drawing closer to Pen, "it is in perspective, and, to be honest, it is a devil of a long way off yet. Still, it looks large, notwithstanding the great distance, and I venture to stake my reputation that when I get it she'll pan out to be a whopper."

"Hark!" said Pen, some one is calling me."

"I think it is your charming sister, Kittie," said the Inimitable; "come, I will accompany you hence from this sequestered spot."

They climed the one hundred stone steps, and joined the rest of the party, who were assembled on the shady lawn. Grandfather Pembrooke's easy chair had been brought out, and his guests were seated around him, some on chairs and ottomans, others on rustic seats, and others still reclining in swinging hammocks.

When the afternoon had worn itself away, and night time came on, little Pen was shown to the room that from thenceforth was to be his, by his sister Kittie.

"Grandfather," she said, "did not want you to see this room until we had it aired and all in perfect readiness, and that is why you have not been shown in here before."

Kittie closed the door, and holding the lamp in one hand, opened the doors of the wardrobe. "This room, dear brother," said Kittie, "was our father's when he was a child, and here in this old wardrobe are relics of his childhood's dress."

"Were those little boots his?" asked Pen, pointing to a pair of tiny, copper-toed boots.

"Yes," said Kittie, "they were his, half-worn out as you see, with the once mud, now dry earth, still clinging to them, just as he took them off. Here is the little waistcoat he used to wear, and this was his first suit of clothes. See how they are worn shreds at the knees and elbows. They have been patched once you will observe, and the patches are worn out. This is his home-made

straw hat that he wore in summer, and this is his little winter cap."

"Oh! Kittie," cried Pen, "to think that our poor father should have been exiled from all this through the avaricious and wicked planning of old Hinchey. It is left to me, dear sister, to revenge my father's wrongs. All these long years you, and grandfather, and everybody thought our poor misjudged parent was guilty of the double crime of murder and theft. What did grandfather say when Richard told him that old Hinchey was the guilty one?"

"Oh, he wept," said Kittie, "for gladness to think that he had never censured his son."

Then both Kittie and Pen gave way to their feelings, and had a good cry. After which, she kissing Pen good night, bade him cry no more, saying, "We are spared to each other, and have a darling little sister to love."

When Pen was left alone he drew the curtain aside so that the rising moon might look in at him, and then made ready and climed into bed, wondering as he did so, if Edward Willets and 'Rilla were in the terrace at the foot of the hundred steps, and whether they didn't find that Harry Baine and Emily Willets were there ahead of them, and whether his sister Kittie and Burt Lester would not go down, too, sometime.

While he thus let his thoughts go wandering on, he fell asleep and dreamed that an old man, with flowing hair and beard as white as the driven snow, came and stood by his bedside, and with a wand, which he held in his right hand, pointed to a small solitary window, square in shape and cased round with heavy casings. It looked out upon a wide waste of waters, that stretched miles and miles away. Little Pen gazed at the broad ocean rolling so majestically before him. He listened, and heard the plaintive sighing of melancholy winds as if afar off. It sounded like the mysterious, yet ceaseless murmur of the sea shells. Then he heard a tiny voice come sweeping over the waters, which seemed to blend with the murmuring of the sea as it said, "Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like the flower and is cut down. He fleeth like the

shadow and continueth not." Then the voice ceased, and little Pen half-wakened and thought he saw his Grandfather Pembrocke glide silently away from his bedside.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE INIMITABLE TURNS PUGILIST.

GRANDFATHER PEMBROOKE would not listen to Richard's going back to Cinapolis, but insisted on his remaining at the old home. "I intend," said the old man, "to send Penfield away to school in a few weeks—as soon as the September term opens—and I want you, Richard, to content yourself here on the farm, the entire charge of which I will give over into your hands."

Both 'Rilla and Kittie, and also Pen, joined with the old man in persuading him to remain.

"I will tell you, grandfather," said Richard, with some emotion, after he had listened to their entreaties, "I will accept your kind invitation and remain, though I feel that I long ago forfeited all claim of even friendship upon you and Kittie, and kinship to my dear sister here, but I am no longer a slave to my old master, strong drink. Strong drink, grandfather, is the floodgate that trembles over the young men of our land. It opens with the clinking of social glasses, and bears its victims down the swift and irresistible current to the depths of all vices, crime and ruin. When a young man becomes a slave to strong drink he also becomes a servant of iniquity. I have been such a slave and such a servant, and am not worthy of your kindness." Richard could no longer keep back the tears; bowing his head upon his hands, he wept like a child.

"Tut, tut," said the old man, while a tear trickled down his furrowed cheek, "think not of the past, Richard, but of the happy present and a bright future."

"Excuse me for interrupting," said Harry Baine, approaching soon after.

"No interruption," said the old man.

"I came to say," continued Harry, "that our happy party will probably break up this afternoon, and before it does I have some hidden links of kinship to explain that will be of interest to some of your guests."

At Grandfather Pembrooke's suggestion Kittie at once assembled the happy party in the large parlor of the old stone mansion.

Harry Baine again stepped forward, and in his clear, musical voice, said :

"Kind friends, it devolves on me to acquaint you with some links of kinship that for years have been lost and only lately discovered. This old gentleman at my left here, whom I have introduced to you as Mr. Timothy, is Timothy Mannahan, who for more than thirty years has resided in America, but will soon start for old England to take charge of a large landed estate that comes to him by inheritance. He had two sisters, one of whom is living, the other dead. One sister married Mr. Daniel Lester, and their oldest child is Mr. Burt Lester, the famous detective, who is one of us to-day. The other sister married a Mr. Willets. Both Mr. and Mrs. Willets died long years ago, but their representatives here to-day are their children, Edward and Emily Willets, and their old uncle here, Timothy Mannahan, assures me that he is most happy to meet them in this newly discovered relationship.

"I am not through yet, my friends," said Harry. "We have found that Richard and 'Rilla Tobias's mother was an own sister to Mr. Daniel Lester, thus making them cousins of Mr. Burt Lester."

A wild and joyful scene followed these announcements. Everybody was shaking hands with everybody else, and calling each other cousin.

The following day Uncle Tim Mannahan took leave of his nieces and nephews, and in company with Uncle George Tobias started for New York, where they engaged passage for Liverpool on the first outward bound steamer.

It seems that Uncle George Tobias and Timothy

Mannahan were schoolmates in childhood. Edward Willets started for Hampton the next day, to resume his duties as operator. Just before taking his leave he chanced to meet Pen in the hall alone. "Pen, my charmer, I have a word to say to you in private."

"Come this way to my room," said Pen, "and then we will not be interrupted."

When the privacy of his room was reached, Pen invited Mr. Willets to a chair, but that lengthy gentleman only said, "Thank you; I prefer standing that I may the better be enabled to keep the numerous skeins of thought from becoming tangled. You remember, my dearest boy," observed the Inimitable, in a glowing, suppressed way, "that I explained to you a few evenings ago, when down in that sequestered terrace at the foot of the stone steps, that by the mellow light of that night's moon I would offer myself a living sacrifice, as it were."

"Halloo! carriage is ready. They are calling for you, Mr. Willets," said Pen.

"Just so, just so," said the Inimitable, at the same time placing the extreme end of his long big-jointed forefinger against little Pen's shirt front, as if he would hang the little fellow up on this spear-shaped finger of his, if he attempted to get away from him. "All I wanted to say, my charming boy, was this: she is tender. Now I make no statement, my dear boy, remember, I make no statement of any kind, do I?"

"No-I-guess-not," said Pen, "only—"

"Only," interrupted Willets, "that 'she is tender.' I didn't say who was tender, and I will not say. No, sir; secrecy, my boy, is an attribute second only in grandeur to a poetic inclination."

The Inimitable then removed his finger prop, and little Pen led the way to the lawn in front, where the household were assembled to bid Mr. Willets good-by, which ceremony was cut noticeably short by the driver announcing it as a firm belief of his that they would miss the train.

When Willets came to Pen, he stooped down and whispered, "She is tender," then nimbly climbed into

the carriage and was driven rapidly away toward Greenwood station, where he arrived just in time to swing upon the already moving train.

Both Harry Baine and Burt Lester had already reported for duty to Lawyer Westover, and returned to Hampton some three days in advance of the Inimitable.

One of their first acts on reaching the village, after meeting the detective who had been acting in Burt Lester's stead, and getting from him such information as he had ferretted out,—which really amounted to nothing positive,—was to take the stage coach for the Mills, and drive out to the Phenomenal McGuffin's farm, with the proper papers in their possession for his arrest on the charge of being an accomplice in attempting to take the life of Uncle George Tobias, known by the nickname "Tobs" at the farm.

They approached the house, and were met by Mrs. McGuffin, who told them that her husband had gone away from home on an extended trip to California, and that she did not know when he would return.

"Could you inform us," said Harry, "where a letter would reach him?"

"I have only received one letter from him," she replied, "and he charged me to tell no one where he was and I dare not disobey him," said the care-worn, timid woman, while she looked frightened at the very thought or disobeying the stern command of her cruel husband.

"Oh! it makes no difference," said Burt, carelessly, "only we heard he had some land to sell, and we came to see him about purchasing."

"I didn't know," replied the woman, "that he wanted to sell any of his land, though very likely he may, and I know nothing about it."

Harry Baine withdrew presently—leaving Burt and Mrs. McGuffin engaged in conversation—and strolled about the yard. He finally got around to the back part of the house, and straightway approached the rail pile to search for the satchels he had hid there on that fatal morning when Burt Lester and George Tobias came so near losing their lives at the cliff.

Sure enough, there the satchels were, just as he had

stowed them away. He quickly brought them forth from their hiding place, and carried them by a back way to the carriage in which they had driven out from the Mills.

Soon after he came back around the same corner of the house around which he had disappeared, observing, as he joined Burt and Mrs. McGuffin, that they certainly had a beautiful country home.

The detectives, after giving the lady their names, Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones, took their departure.

"I tell you," said Burt, as they seated themselves in the carriage, and turned their horses' heads toward the Mills, "that woman is a good, true wife, but a terribly abused one. She is made of finer clay than her brutal, avaricious husband."

"I heartily agree with you," replied Harry. "McGuffin is one of those coarse, illiterate, fortunate men, who seemingly by accident stumble into the possession of great wealth, marry far above themselves, and then take especial delight in trying to crush out and blunt the finer feelings of their helpless wives."

"Yes," said Burt, "he is one of those self-important ignoramuses who look on any man who does not fully agree with him as a crank of the first water, but regards the man who cows to his whims, and agrees with him fully, as a remarkably intelligent person."

They then got down to sober talk and discussed numerous plans of finding out McGuffin's whereabouts. What conclusion they came to may be inferred by their having a long conversation with Mrs. O'Riley, the postmistress at the Mills, who entered heartily into their plans, promising what they requested.

They took passage in the Hampton-bound stage soon after, and as they were the only passengers, had ample opportunity to discuss their future plans. It was agreed that Harry should remain at Hampton in the capacity of tank inspector, and watch Lin Brinkerhoff's movements, and be ready to act if any information came from the Widow O'Riley relative to McGuffin's whereabouts. Burt would start the next day for Milford to keep Lawyer Lawson company, and learn what he could. They

both agreed that the finding of the fourteen thousand dollars was paramount to all else, and the hunting down of Hinchey and McGuffin a secondary matter, although both felt that the success of the one was in some way dependent on the other.

It was after nightfall when they reached Hampton, and so they concluded to take up their old accustomed place of concealment at the depot for awhile, and endeavor to learn something if possible.

"I tell you, Burt," said Harry, in a half whisper, "it certainly will not be many months longer until we will unearth something," and sanguine Burt agreed with him.

They little guessed how many moons would pass over their heads before the winds of adversity would cease, and changing their course become "winning winds," for them.

The detectives approached the depot cautiously, and discovered that the Inimitable Willets had returned. Yes, there the long, sandy individual was, he and Lin Brinkerhoff.

"You do not think, Burt," whispered Harry, "that Willets, who is your cousin, you know, is in any way connected with this fourteen thousand dollar business?"

"That is the hardest question," replied Burt, "that you could have asked me. Cousin or no cousin, if he is guilty he shall suffer."

"Hist! look there," said Harry. "Willets and young Brinkerhoff are drinking champagne. What is that they are saying?"

"My charming Mr. Brinkerhoff," said Willets, "I cannot adequately express to you my feelings at the present moment. I no longer call you by your first name. No, sir, you are now a Mister. Any young gentleman who has passed through the school of telegraphy, as you have done, and slipped out of the front door, as it were, with my blessing—please remember that—and reappeared again as a brother official of mine, is worthy to be Mistered. Mr. L. Brinkerhoff, night operator at Hampton. Mr. Edward Willets, day operator at Hampton. Ah! how dignified that rings out on the night air."

"I thank you very much, Mr. Willets," said Lin, "indeed I do, for the great assistance you have been to me. I can now earn money and in time attend college."

"Mr. Brinkerhoff, there is my hand," said Willets, with knightly solemnity. "You are worthy of it, my charming Lin,—Mister, I should say—and in extending it to you I am only complying with my poetic inclinations, my religious tendencies, my moral sense of justice and the scholarly dictates of my well informed and highly cultured mind. Moreover, it is in good keeping and perfect harmony with the eternal fitness of things."

The two then shook hands warmly, and the Inimitable, after wiping away the gathering perspiration from his brow, said: "There is a beautiful little melody that in early youth I learned while yet the pet of a loving household, one line of which I still remember. It is as follows:

'Champagne Charlie is his name.'

"Now, Mister Brinkerhoff, in solemn commemoration of the sentiment therein expressed, permit me, sir, to present you with another foaming glass of sparkling, dancing Mumm's Extra Dry, which, I doubt not, will cause the already burning coals of friendship to blaze up with a new life, and send the snapping, laughing sparks of hillarity soaring away on the wings of everlasting friendship, and join company with the merry twinkling stars above."

At this they emptied their glasses.

Lin observed that it was indeed a most pleasant drink, and the Inimitable, filling the glasses again, remarked that being a "Repeater" himself, he would not take time to give another toast until he had treated the glass of champagne already in his stomach to an affable companion.

After the second glass had been disposed of, Willets seated himself, and said: "I have just flown from the arms, as it were, of my lady love, and in drinking this champagne I am tempering off from the intoxicating happiness that I have so lately experienced. And now that I think of it, how deucedly appropriate to my case are the immortal Waller's words, where he says—

'In love, the victors from the vanquished fly;
They fly that wound and they pursue that die.'

"From these words, my charming Mr. Brinkerhoff, you would naturally infer that I had vanquished something. That something had received a life wound at my hands. If such should be your surmises, I will only say that they are about correct."

"I am afraid, Mr. Willets," said Lin, getting a little less timid,—even approaching a reckless air, by reason, possibly, of his promotion, but more probably because of the natural effects of Mumm's Extra Dry—"that you are inclined to be a heart bruiser of no mean ability."

"Sir," said Willets, rising to his feet, "the words you give utterance to are indeed most highly commendable in one so young, so unsophisticated, and on general principles so ignorant of the ways of the world. It proves conclusively, sir, to my mind, that you are progressing."

These well meant words of compliment rather galled instead of pleased Lin, and he quickly retorted:

"I may be young, Mr. Willets, but don't forget that I have the counsel of a sister who is older."

"And," said Willets, "a most charming young lady she is. Perfectly stunning, decidedly so, sir."

"I call my sister a handsome lady, Mr. Willets, but I don't care to hear you use the slangy phrase 'stunning' when speaking of her."

Young Brinkerhoff delivered himself of this speech in a tone of withering scorn, which he hurled with an evil look at the Inimitable.

Willets quickly caught his cue, and replied in his usual urbane style: "Certainly, my charming Mister Brinkerhoff, your sister is most assuredly a remarkably handsome woman, and with due deference to yourself and not meaning to infer anything, I will also say, by way of confession, that I can see no family resemblance between yourself and this charming sister of yours."

"I discover, Mr. Willets," said Lin, "that your sarcasm is as sharp as your compliments are uncalled for."

"And I discover," replied Willets, quickly, "that your would-be retorts are as dull as your cranky peevishness is absurd. I freely admit, in making this last statement, my charming Mr. Brinkerhoff, that our conversation is taking a turn wholly at variance with the poetic harmony of the occasion. Therefore, I propose that we 'drive dull care away' by participating in another glass of 'the sparkling.' Nothing, sir, equals the 'sparkling.' Ye Gods! What an eradicater it is. It scatters the troubles that beset a heavy heart like turpentine scatters every vestige of a swelling. Something very remarkable, sir, about its wonderful power. The poor become suddenly rich, the downcast and sorrowful, light-hearted and merry, the almost frozen warmed back into a glowing warmth, and the bashful man becomes communicative. Such, sir, are a few of the many changes that are miraculously brought about—that is, miraculously sudden—by a convivial acquaintanceship with 'the sparkling.'"

They then drank again, and after this Lin seemed to grow better natured, and they grew quite communicative. At last the Inimitable arose and said, in his own happy way, "My charming companion, I must soon—" Here he picked up the champagne bottle and saw that it was well-nigh emptied—then added, "Yes, very soon, bid you good night, and seek my pillowy couch at my new, yet old quarters, and there be lulled away into a refreshing repose; though in doing it I well know I am not only sacrificing your sociable companionship, but also pursuing a widely different course than that intimated in those beautiful words by the illustrious what's-his-name—it makes no difference—where he eloquently says:

'No sleep till morn,
When youth and pleasure meet,
To chase the glowing hours
With flying feet.'"

"Are you not still boarding at the hotel?" asked Lin.

"No, sir! a thousand times, no!" said Willets, warmly. "Do not, my charming companion, for an instant suppose that I would longer patronize an establishment that sets such abominably tough steaks before his guests as old Scudmore purchases. If you, my-never-to-be-forgotten friend, entertained a thought that I still would remain an inmate of that third-class boarding house, pray disabuse your intelligent mind of the erroneous impression at once. From henceforth, sir, I am domiciled at Miss Zurilda Goodsil's. Returned to my first love, as it were."

"What room did you occupy, Mr. Willets, at the hotel?" asked Lin.

"I was quartered, sir," replied the Inimitable, "in room No. — No. —. Look here, my highly esteemed friend, did I ever tell you in any of my previous talks, what room I occupied?"

As Willets made this inquiry he scratched his sandy-coated head and looked shrewdly at Lin, as if he was fearful that newly promoted gentleman was trying to get him to perform impossibilities by telling alike the same story twice.

"You told me," replied Lin, "that your room was on the first floor, and I wondered what number it was."

"Oh, yes, so I did!" replied Willets, and then observed—talking more to himself than to Lin—that it was a narrow escape and a deucedly close call, whereupon he took a lengthy pull at the champagne bottle, so lengthy, indeed, that when he set it down there was nothing but an empty bottle left to adorn the table.

"I see you are a full hand at some things," said Lin, eyeing the empty bottle with an eye of disfavor.

"My complimentary friend," said Willets, "I freely acknowledge that I am possessed of several remarkable traits, but if one thing above another it is long-windedness, especially if the 'one thing' is a well-filled champagne bottle, and the 'above another' are my thirsting lips—lips, sir, that once upon a time in life, when acting in the envied capacity of a household pet—were red and rosy as the budding flower; but, alas! at the present writing they are slightly dilapidated and weather cracked,

as it were, occasioned, no doubt, by the cruel storms of adversity."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Willets," said Lin, "you did not tell me the number of the room you occupied at the hotel?"

"I see, my inquisitive companion," said the Inimitable, "that you insist in extorting from me the particular locality in that abominable old hull of a hotel, where I was wont to lay this weary frame down to rest. It was, sir, room No. 47."

"Why, that—it is not on the first floor—47 is a garret room," said Lin, while a triumphant smile hovered on his flushed countenance.

"I beg your pardon, sir, it is on the first floor, counting from the roof," replied Willets, "and now," he went on, "I want to say a word in reference to the hotel, its bill of fare and the detestable scab, old Scudmore, the proprietor." As he said this he arose to his feet again, but neither he nor Lin observed a face, that just then appeared at the open door, which in point of resemblance favored the landlord in question.

"First," said Willets, bringing that familiar big and long-jointed finger of his into play, "in regard to the hotel—if I may be pardoned for calling a third-class boarding house by such a name—there positively is not, sir, a sound piece of lumber in the whole structure from cellar to garret, and every crack and crevice in the old hull is absolutely alive with a squirming, crawling, biting class of permanent lodgers, growing fat and sassy off the blood of transient victims, who are compelled by necessity to sleep, or try to, in the most miserable excuses for beds that it was ever my lot to lay my weary bones upon. A constant warfare is necessary to preserve life. The siege is laid the very moment the unfortunate victim strikes the bed in the attitude of repose, and is not raised until the transient lodger rises from his couch. Second, in regard to the bill of fare——"

"No, you don't! no, you don't!" cried the man who had been looking in at the door, and who was none other than Mr. Scudmore, the proprietor. "No, you don't say another word about my highly respectable

house." As he said this he advanced toward the Inimitable with clinched fists and a threatening manner. "I'll teach you, sir," said he, "to slander and tell malicious lies about my first-class hotel." At this he rushed head first toward Willets, chewing the very air between his grating teeth in the fullness of his rage.

Instead, however, of assaulting an individual who was destitute of pugilistic powers, he came at one who was able, and did compliment him with a staggering blow on the head. The landlord recovered from its effect in a moment, however, and then he and the Inimitable clinched in an angry embrace; but one of Willets's long arms was free, and with it he fairly rained down on his assailant such a shower of shoulder strokes that the landlord was very soon convinced he was dealing with a skillful and experienced hand at the business. However, the plucky Mr. Scudmore clung tight to the long, lithe form of his opponent, and did such effective work with his teeth, that it was several minutes before he begged Willets to hold on and cease his pelting knocks. Willets released his burly adversary and each stood eyeing the other, panting like half-famished curs.

Finally Willets found breath, and said: "Does the gentleman who runs the third class boarding-house want some more?"

Scudmore, between his pants, said no, he believed not.

This made the Inimitable wax brave, and he exultingly said: "Sir, I am always loaded for bear, and I can whip you any day within an inch of your life in just three minutes. Could do it in one minute, if you hadn't practiced chewing tough beefsteak so long that you have wonderful strength in your jaws. Did you say you wanted some more?" Willets went on clinching his fists, and assuming sparring attitudes, and prancing about the vanquished Mr. Scudmore, threatening every moment to give him one for luck, anyway.

"I have a full stock on hand, sir. Am always loaded. I am a slugger from Sluggersville, I am. Can knock down more men than a corporal's guard can drag out.

Don't be bashful, sir—plenty in the factory if you want more. I am a pulverizer, an old time shoulder-striker from away back."

While the Inimitable was relieving himself in this way, Mr. Scudmore stood trembling with fear, expecting every moment that Willets would open a deadly assault.

"I guess, Mr. Willets," Lin observed, "that Mr. Scudmore has had all the fighting he cares for to-night."

"That's a fact, I have," said the landlord quickly, looking around at Lin, as if he was very thankful for the observation.

"You are quite sure?" asked Willets.

"Quite sure," replied Mr. Scudmore.

"Very well then," said Willets, "your statement being true, Mr. Scudmore, you will please face about and scud." The order was obeyed by the vanquished landlord with military promptness and soon after the Inimitable bade Lin good-night, and started for the spinster's, singing in a low, happy way snatches of old love songs, wholly unconscious as he walked along that a dark figure hovered near him, ever and anon growing closer and closer, and then hastily drawing back like fretful advancing and retreating shadows on the angry bosom of troubled waters.

CHAPTER XXX.

AT CHALMER UNIVERSITY.

FIVE years in the future seems a long, long way off. Especially is this true with the young, who wait so impatiently for another birthday to come around, or for the merry Christmas Holidays, an event that is ever welcome to the happy, expectant hearts of those in the morning of life's journey.

Their cup of care-free happiness is as full as the dew

is plentiful on the tender herbage in early morning. Yet, after a five years' journey has been performed, and we pause and look back, we unvoluntarily exclaim; "Ah! how short the years have been. It seems but yesterday since I was a romping child on the green."

Thus it was that five years rolled swiftly away since the curtain fell on the scenes in our last chapter, and opened in this. Between these acts, strange as it may seem, nothing of particular importance had transpired. Our two detective friends, Burt Lester and Harry Baine, are still following up and trying to ferret out that which has now for almost six years baffled them.

A dozen different times they have believed themselves almost in a position to reach out and recover the fourteen thousand dollars, and as often have they been disappointed.

The Inimitable Willets is still day operator at Hampton, and pecuniary troubles hover about him as of old. Neither McGuffin nor old Hinchey have been seen or heard of since they so suddenly disappeared.

Lin Brinkerhoff is now a young man, seventeen years old, and during all these five years has faithfully filled the position of night operator at Hampton, and in every square moment he has had, has assiduously applied himself to his studies. His old ambition for knowledge has sharpened with the years, and his arrangements are all made to commence a collegiate course at Covesville. Only a few days now until the September term opens.

Old Grandfather Pembrooke is still alive, and these last years have been happy, tranquil ones for him. Kittie and 'Rilla are still with him, while Richard is looked to as general manager and a foster father to them all. He has developed into all his reformation promised.

Little Pen, as we, in other days were wont to call him, is now a grown-up young gentleman, but very spare and delicate. His health has been very poor, so much so that he gave up his school life some two years prior to the time at which we write. His health is greatly improved, now, however, and he is to commence his collegiate course, also, at Covesville, with the opening of the September term.

Handsome Emily Willets alone is changed. Never more will she look upon the happy faces of her many friends. The vision that Harry Baine had, years ago when he was convalescent at Cinapolis, after he had been nursed back to life by her watchful, loving care, seems to have been prophetic of succeeding events. Then he fancied he saw the smooth waters of contentment ripple and break, and the surging waves arm themselves with white mariner caps of trouble, as they beat high in their mad lashings against the beach, while their dirge-like lament was,

"Bro-ken wa-ves, bro-ken wa-ves,"

Through the rising mist he saw a tiny bark, and Emily's sweet face; and faintly he heard her chanting voice as it blended with and became a part of the ocean's lament:

"Bro-ken wa-ves, bro-ken wa-ves!"

She was brought down with a long spell of sickness soon after returning home to Cinapolis from Grandfather Pembrooke's. For days her life trembled on the scales of uncertainty, but at last the secret hand was stretched forth, the magic spring of life was touched, and the low ebbing of life regained its natural ebb and flow.

When, however, her convalescent days came on, her eyesight began failing her, and finally the lamp of light faded from out her beautiful eyes forever, and she was left hopelessly blind.

Harry visited her twice every year, and was very gentle and kind to poor, unfortunate Emily.

Let us now hie away to Covesville, for it is the opening day of the fall term of school.

Covesville is quite an educational country town, some five miles away from any railway. It is a very old and quiet place, and has beautiful streets, with rows of large trees planted along on either side. Planted years and years ago by hands that long ere this have ceased

to do, except as "the deeds of good men live after them."

Chalmer University is the pride of the good people of Covesville. It is a large building, several stories high, built of brick and stone. On one side an ivy vine had climbed up and up, until it now reached the very gable, and when Pen saw this he thought how emblematic this twining ivy is of the student's life. At first, no doubt, it was but a tiny plant, but year by year it had grown stronger and stronger, and with its twining, clinging tendrils reached up higher and higher, until at last the last round in the ladder had been reached. So, also, with the student. Little by little he adds to his store of knowledge, and step by step he advances.

A wide campus ground surrounds the college building, thickly set with beautiful trees, and the turfy lawn was kept closely mown. Two large dormitories stood not far away to the east of the college, while just to the west was located the ladies' boarding hall, presided over by an acquaintance of ours, Mrs. Bethel, Pen's aunt. Her two little boys have grown tall with the years, and are now preparing for college.

Lin and Pen came face to face on the campus grounds, a little while before the last bell rang.

Six years ago they parted when Pen took the stage coach to go to McGuffin's farm, since which time they have never met. Indeed, during all these years, Lin Brinkerhoff had heard nothing of his old playmate except that he had mysteriously disappeared from the McGuffin farm.

Pen passed on, busily thinking that here, at this very college, his father long years ago had commenced his college days.

Lin had changed wonderfully, and it was no wonder Pen did not recognize him. Then he was but a boy. To-day he was a robust, broad-shouldered man in stature, and for five years had filled a man's position. Pen, however, wore the same thoughtful face that he did when a child. That same far-away look that Lin had so often noticed in childhood days, was still there. The same broad, full forehead and tapering chin, the same head,

with massive wavy hair. There could be no mistake—it must be Pen Pembrooke, thought Lin. True he was small of stature for his years, but that very fact made the slowly retreating figure look more like his old playfellow.

"Hello!" said Lin, turning and following after him.

Pen faced about, and as he did so, Lin, feeling sure now that it was Pen, said, "If I mistake not, sir, I am addressing Mr. Pembrooke?"

"That is my name," replied Pen, "but really, sir, you have the advantage of me."

"Why, Pen," said Lin, beamingly, "don't you remember your old playfellow, Lin Brinkerhoff?"

"No?" said Pen, interrogatively, "I mean I do remember him, but surely, sir——"

"Give us your hand," interrupted Lin. "Brinkerhoff is my name, and no mistake."

The two shook hands warmly, and were mutually pleased at this unexpected meeting. They strolled about the camp grounds until the opening exercises commenced. They were, at their request, assigned rooms together, and as the days of early college life rolled by, they became acquainted again, each with the other, as he was now.

The boys of six years ago had silently disappeared, and with these intervening years blended into early manhood.

Lin Brinkerhoff was the same ambitious, shrewd, accumulating sort of a young man that he was as a boy, when he, not only for pastime but also for profit, traded slate pencils and other school boy accouterments, also traded jack knives, "sight unseen, whole handle, whole blade, or no trade."

In the early part of our story we have seen how he viewed life; he, believing that to be happy one must possess the comforts of high life, and that such comforts were a purchasable commodity. Hence, to be happy, one must possess wealth. To be sure, those early tendencies were somewhat veiled over now with the subtle mask that is universally woven with the rolling on of years. He had developed into a fine-looking, broad-

shouldered, robust young gentleman, with a reckless daring way about him, a way that Pen could not exactly understand.

Both Pen and Lin entered upon a classical course of study. Their class was a large one, as freshmen classes usually are, composed of young ladies and gentlemen from many different states.

A considerable time elapsed before Pen, in his retiring, silent way, had formed the acquaintance of a half a dozen of his classmates.

Lin, however, in his half-reckless, daring way seemed to possess a fascinating charm that drew all the class to him, and very soon he was on the most friendly terms with every member of it. One reason of this, perhaps, was that he was very soon acknowledged to be the most apt student in the entire freshmen class.

He stood at the head, so to speak, and was soon a favorite among the professors, as well as among his associates. Next to him came Pen, who seemed to live with himself and his books, with no desire to know others or by others be known.

One evening, in the early days of October, Lin returned to his room, and found Pen had finished his lessons, and was intently reading his Bible.

"Well, my dear fellow," said Lin, "what sublime work are you so intently poring over now?"

"It is the Bible," answered Pen, without looking up.

"The Bible," repeated Lin, "and pray, sir, is that the book you have been so much engaged on night after night?"

"I usually read a chapter or two every night," answered Pen.

"And I presume," said Lin, "also engage in a season of prayer before retiring. Have a little camp meeting all by yourself?" A half scornful smile curled his lip as he made this observation.

"I certainly do say my prayers every evening," replied Pen, "and I hope you do the same."

"My dear friend," said Lin, with a scoffing laugh, "I do not. I have read, sir, the treasured up thoughts of such philosophers as Voltaire, Paine and others, and

with all due deference to whatever belief you may have in the Bible, I am not prepared to accept its teachings."

Pen looked silently at his companion for a moment, and strange shadows flitted over his face. Lin's words were a revelation that he was not prepared for, and it pained him keenly to think that the playmate of his youth, and classmate in college, could give utterance to such words.

At last, he said, "I am very sorry, Lin, to hear you make such a confession."

"Did you ever read," asked Lin, "Tom Paine's 'Age of Reason?'"

"I never did," Pen replied.

"Well, you shall read it. I have it in my trunk, and after you have finished it, I imagine your faith in the divinity of the Bible will waver a little, and strange doubts will, at least, creep into your mind about the plan of redemption as taught by the New Testament."

"Then," said Pen, firmly, "I will never read it. I do not wish to live to see the day that doubt comes to me regarding the plan of salvation as taught by Christ. Just imagine," said Pen, earnestly, "what would a sin-cursed and fallen world do without a Saviour?"

"But, why," asked Lin, "why curse a world of creatures in order to necessitate a Saviour?"

Pen looked astonished and deeply grieved at his companion. A half frightened expression fell over his countenance, and then he slowly said:

"You talk like an infidel, but I pray God you are not."

"I can discover," replied Lin, "no separate existence of a soul in the mechanism of the body. Modern philosophy, my dear fellow, modern philosophy has long ago routed from its stronghold the theology of our great grandsires, which was based wholly on the divinity of the Bible."

"And I," said Pen, "strictly adhere to the faith of our grandfathers, and firmly believe the teachings of this Holy Book. It is very painful to me to hear you talk as you do, Lin, it is so, and I hope the time will come

when you will look upon the Bible as a divine book and regard all philosophy, to the contrary, as blasted and unwholesome fruit, that generates only from darkly bewildered minds."

"If it is a painful subject, Pen, we will drop it and talk of other things. By the way, I want to tell you what a young lady of our class said to me this evening about you."

"About me?" said Pen; "I can't imagine who it could be, for I am not acquainted with any of them."

"Miss Baine," said Lin, eyeing Pen very closely, as he mentioned the young lady's name.

"Miss Baine? Really, I did not know there was a young lady in the class by that name; but the name is familiar to me. A good many years ago I met a little girl by the name of Lillie Baine. I presume by this time she is quite a young lady. What remark did she make?"

"Oh, she was wondering," replied Lin, "if you were the same person, who, a number of years ago, rode in the stage coach with her mother and herself."

Pen came to his feet at once at this announcement, and declared that he was indeed that self same individual, and that the identical Bible he held in his hand was a present from her.

"Lin's face, for some cause, clouded at once, but Pen was wholly unconscious of it, and went on talking in higher spirits than Lin had ever witnessed in him since they commenced school. The more Pen talked about Lillie Baine, declaring that he was highly pleased to learn that she was their classmate, and that he must see her on the morrow and have a talk with her, the darker grew the shadow on Lin's face.

At last he brightened up, and, in a confidential way, said:

"I will tell you, Pen, frankly, that I think considerable of Miss Baine—in fact, she is my preference among them all. I was a little nettled this evening, however, when she made another remark about you that, as yet, I haven't told but which I feel that I ought to men-

tion, as we have always been—except during the years of our separation—like brothers. It was this: She observed while we were out walking together that you had not developed into a very fine specimen of manhood, and she hoped you would not bore her by talking about the trifling present she once made you, and intimated that if she had it to do over again she would do otherwise. It nettled me to hear her talk so about you, and I said to her that I did not like to hear such remarks about my room-mate, especially as he and I spent our boyhood days together. Her only reply was that she hoped I would tell you; and she talked on so pleasantly, in that winning way she has, that I was soon over my half angriness, and promised to go walking again to-morrow evening."

"How dare she go out walking, or you either, Lin, when there is an order against strolling about?"

"Why, we slip away and meet at the lower part of the campus grounds, and neither the matron of the ladies' boarding hall nor the professors are any the wiser."

"I would not," said Pen, "violate the rules of the school if I were you, and I am absolutely astonished to learn that Lillie Baine or any other young lady would consent to such acts of disobedience. I must say her observations regarding myself are not appreciated. However, I will not send back this Bible to her, but keep it in memory of the little, golden-haired girl who gave it to me, but she, it seems, is no more. She has grown away from her former modest self, and become a trifling pupil of a wayward, fashionable world. No, I will not bore her with my company even, let alone talk of this worthy gift that for so many lonely years has been my solace. As to the giver, I wish to remember her as she was then, and do not care to know my golden-haired friend as the world has changed and fashioned her."

"There goes the bell," said Lin, hiding his face by looking out of the window.

"Yes," said Pen, rising to his feet, "and it says we must retire, so good night to you."

"Good night," Lin responded, and at once retired to his own room.

When Pen reached his room, he bowed down and silently prayed to his God for fallen humanity, and invoked his blessing on the companion of his youth.

Let us cross over and enter the room of Lin Brinkerhoff, and see the contrast between the one who has unbounded faith in God's holy word, and one who renounces his teachings as a myth.

On retiring to his room, Lin seated himself by his window and gazed out into the darkness below, and up at the twinkling stars, and had his thoughts been framed into words they would have said, "Ah, Lin; you made a bold move to-night, but I guess it is all safe,—he will never bother you, go on and win her if possible. Her old father, Stephen Baine, claims to have lost fourteen thonsand dollars, but it did not seem to hurt him. He is what I call financially solid. Money, money, money, aye, and gold.

'Gold, many hunted, sweat and bled for gold :
Waked all the night and labored all the day,
And what is this allurement, dost thou ask?'

If I had a God I would ask Him for gold, and would also ask Him to forgive me for those 'whole cloth' falsehoods I filled poor Pen up with so easily, I meant all right. I meant that I would like to have her slip away from that old hawkeyed Mrs. Bethel, and go promenading with me, and as to what I told him she said, why, all is fair, they say, in love and war, and I, for one, feel like it was a case with me. Win her I must and will. Pen is terribly in earnest in believing the Bible, and if I am a disbeliever I will say that he shows good sense in not reading the unsettling philosophies. 'Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise,' is an especially true saying in theological matters. Philosophy establishes doubt, and puts you far out at sea without giving you compass or guide of any kind, and tells you there is not a safe harbor on the entire coast line, that divides the known from the great unknown. I do wonder what life is, any way? From whence did man come and

whither is he going? Is there any difference between my mind and my body? If my mind is the seat of reason, and could not exist but for the body to encase it, while in turn the body must have a spirit to animate it, are they not one and the same? Or, if they are not the same, is not the one necessary to the very existence of the other, and do not both perish together?" Thus, long into the night he sat and thought of these trying, "dread questions," which those who are without the fold of Christ are continually beset with.

Lin's whole life helped to confirm his belief in his own mastership, and renounced any belief in a Creator or Maker. His sins and shortcomings, secret dealings with McGuffin, etc., had never been visited upon his head. No, but day by day his pathway became more plain, and the fragrant flowers thicker by the wayside, until now he was in college and an own classmate of one young in years, yet divinely handsome and perfect in his eyes. "Ah, Lillie Baine, Lillie Baine,"—were the words that trembled on his lips when he arose from his seat by the window, and sought his couch.

Never did he once think that he had done Lillie Baine an injury by the malicious and selfish falsehoods he had told Pen. Ah! There are daggers unsheathed from their scabbards and dyed in innocent men's blood all over our land, which cause wailing and sorrow enough, without such meddling gossip as Lin had been guilty of. It poisons the happiness of the one gossiped about, and destroys faith in him who hears it.

The gory dagger of the assassin can not more effectually accomplish dire ruin. The whispered detraction about he or she who has thus been smirched by the lying tongue of gossip, is like the ceaseless eating of a cancer. The law of the land throws the judicial cloak and mantle of armor around the life of its subjects, and he that spills the heart's blood of his fellow men may be brought to justice, but there is no redress from the wounds inflicted on the innocent by the unscrupulous assassins of character that infest society in all forms and behind all sorts of masks. The stability of friendship, pure and true, is the only anchor.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A PICNIC IN THE WOODS.

ON a beautiful Saturday morning in late October, the freshmen class of Chalmer University partook of an early breakfast, for a picnic in the wood, a few miles away, had been promised them.

Heavily laden lunch baskets were provided, and seemed, together with the youug ladies of the party, to be Mrs. Bethel's special charge. In addition to this watchful matron, one of the professors was to accompany them.

At an early hour the carriages came around, and had not long to wait, for all were in readiness. An hour's ride brought them to a pleasant wild-wood, where stately giant forest trees were plentiful on the margin of a clear and crystal lake. The brown leaves were falling in showers at every little gust of wind that played with the tree tops.

Some of the brown and deadened leaves would shoot down swiftly from over-hanging branches to the smooth surface of the water below, as if their last desire on earth was to join company with the pebbly rocks that lay at the bottom of the lake, so plainly visible down in the clear water, while other leaves dropped listlessly down, turning over and over in their fluttering, downward flight, as if they were loath to leave the parent home where they had budded into life.

Pen and Lin helped to make up this happy party which came for a good romp in the woods. The ferns were plentiful, and many of them were gathered. The professor said they were fine botanical specimens, but it is doubtful if his class viewed anything that day with botanical eyes. Three row-boats had been brought along, and at once launched by the bravest of the young gentlemen. The old gray-haired professor said that every freshman class of Chalmers University, for twenty years past, had had an October holiday.

"If that is the case, Professor," said Lillie Baine,—

whose handsome face and gentle ways had made her quite a favorite,—"this holiday is not a special privilege, but ours by right of custom."

"Do you think, Miss Lillie," said the professor, "that a custom right is a good title?"

"I heard you say, professor," replied Lillie, "in your recitation room the other day, that custom made law, and if that is true, a right by reason of custom is just about as good a title as a lawful title."

All the young ladies joined in a hearty laugh, declarlng that Lillie had vanquished the professor, while he himself good naturedly said "he guessed she had."

Lin Brinkerhoff had determined to make an "impression," as he termed it, before this holiday drew to a close, and the only obstacle he feared was Penfield Pembrooke. Ever since that night they had their conversation about religious matters and Lillie Baine, he had looked on Pen in the light of a rival. Not that he had any reason to, only a vague apprehension.

His scruples would not stand in his way, if an opportunity came to build his point of eminence on Pen's downfall, let the wreck come in any shape it might. Lin's success in life had been by taking "time by the forelock," and never "sleeping away his rights." He had had several very pleasant conversations with Lillie Baine, while escorting her to chapel service, and she had mentioned the fact that once upon a time she met Penfield Pembrooke in a stage coach, and wondered why he did not try to renew the acquaintance.

Lin promptly told her in confidence that Pen had said to him that "he sincerely hoped Miss Lillie Baine would not try to claim an acquaintanceship with him, because he happened to meet her once when she was a little, silly girl." Lin added that he did not know what young Pembrooke meant by it, but those were his exact words. "And he also said," continued Lin, "that he didn't care to mix with any of the young ladies."

Lillie wondered if aristocratic Mr. Pembrooke didn't have his girl already picked out before he came to college, and, perhaps, promised her he wouldn't even look at anybody else.

Lin, in reply to this, said, "If Miss Baine would never mention it, he would confess that such was the case, for Pen had told him as much."

Thus, by fraud and deceitfulness, Lin was planting sharp thorns in unsuspecting Pen's pathway. He also persuaded Lillie to read "Age of Reason," which she had completed only a few days before this holiday.

Soon after reaching the grounds, Pen had wandered away into the woods alone. There was a real charm about this hazy Indian summer sort of day, roaming through the thick carpet of dry leaves, and watching others twirling over and over in their downward flight. There was a melancholy sadness about it, too, so much like his own life had been. It seemed to strengthen him, to thus commune with his own thoughts, surrounded by such sympathizing companions as the withered and browned leaves and the tall trees, many of them now naked and seemingly so lonely.

He remembered that when a mere child, at his old Hampton home, he used to shed bitter tears in summer time at the very thought of the beautiful, growing herbage and shady trees so soon being robbed of their green verdure and coats of mantling leaves, but many bitter experiences had taught him since then that all vegetable and animal life were budded and born to die, and as life was uncertain, so also was the inconsistency and waywardness of the children of men, an unexplained mystery. He wondered if the dying leaves and verdure were not a sort of a forewarning to the tall oaks that they, too, must sooner or later succumb to the hand of time.

The barking squirrels, gathering the ripened nuts for winter store, reminded him that winter was coming on, "And to me," said he, "will at last come a winter, but whenever it comes I will try and be ready." How appropriate to such thoughts are Pollock's words:

"And when at last poor man subdued,
Lies down to death resigned;
May he not still be happier far
Than those he leaves behind?"

When Pen returned to the bank of the lake where the baskets had been left, he found only the professor

and Mrs. Bethel. They were comfortably seated on camp chairs, and Mrs. Bethel greeted Pen with a smile and observed, when he came up, that it was almost lunch time and that soon they would have to gather in the young ladies and gentlemen.

Pen, seeing a boat moored close by, said he would take a row before dinner.

"Do you understand rowing, Mr. Pembrooke?" asked the professor.

"Oh yes, sir, quite well," answered Pen, "at the academy where I attended school three years we used to go rowing quite often."

He seated himself in the boat, and adjusted the small sail as it should be, then, picking up his oars, shot with skilled speed out on the bosom of the smooth waters.

"Did you know, professor, that Mr. Pembrooke is a nephew of mine?"

"I did not, Mrs. Bethel," the dignified professor replied.

"Yes," said the matron, "his mother and I were sisters."

While the professor and Mrs. Bethel chatted pleasantly on, and even while Pen had been taking his lonely yet enjoyable stroll through the forest, Lin was enjoying himself to the utmost in Lillie Baine's company.

All the young ladies and gentlemen of the party, excepting Pen, had wandered away and seemingly lost themselves among the steep banks and deep dells in search of ferns and moss.

Lin succeeded in monopolizing Lillie's company entirely, and the two strolled on, crossing deep ravines and climbing abrupt banks, until at last they came to a large, flat-surfaced rock that just lifted itself above the bank in which it was imbedded high enough to afford a very pleasant seat, where Lin proposed that they stop and rest.

As they seated themselves, Lin said that he was enjoying himself immensely.

"I guess we all are," replied Lillie.

"But then," said Lin, "not like I am."

"I wonder now, Mr. Brinkerhoff," said Lillie, look-

ing merrily at him with laughing eyes, "in what way you are particularly blest more than the rest of us?"

"Why, in having you all to myself, for a little while, at least," replied Lin, blushing to the very roots of his hair at the unnatural sound of his own voice.

"I never heard any one talk like you do," said Lillie, as she went on arranging some ferns that lay in her lap. "I never heard any one talk sentimental, but I always thought that is about the way it would sound." As she said this she actually managed to suppress her mirth and sigh a regular regulation sigh.

Lin took heart at once, and observed that not many young ladies, in fact, none that he was acquainted with, possessed the soul that Miss Baine did.

"Oh! I don't think I am past praying for," she replied.

"No, and never will be," said Lin, earnestly.

"Not until," said Lillie, quickly, "I either live to be a very old, old maid, my face terribly wrinkled all over, oh, just horrid! or marry an over gallant, complimentary sort of a man, and he turns out, as they usually do, to be an unbearable, selfish old grumbler."

Lin was silent for a moment, wondering, no doubt, if she "had any reference to allusions," as the Inimitable Willets would say. But "love is blind," and so was infatuated Lin. He finally subdued his thoughts enough to say he sincerely hoped she would be blessed with an entirely different sort of a husband, "for you are indeed worthy of the best in the land."

"It is very kind, Mr. Brinkerhoff, for you to say so," replied Lillie, as sober as a little Puritan. "One thing I feel certain of, and that is, when I do meet my fate, I will know him the very first time we meet."

"Perhaps," said Lin, in a very tender voice, "you have already met him since you came to Covesville. They say the birds follow the course of the sun; so, also, may he follow close beside you for a great many years, before you discover that he indeed is your true knight."

"I hope I haven't met him," said Lillie, teasingly, while she kept her talking eyes upon a bunch of moss that lay in her lap.

"You hope not?" interrogatively questioned Lin.

"Yes, I hope not, for you know," said Lillie, looking innocently up at him, "I am quite sure no one I ever met, would make anything like the best in the land, and that is the kind you were good enough to wish I might get; and I have made up my mind that my knight must be a military man, with a blue suit and brass buttons."

Lin colored perceptibly at this speech of his fair companion and wondered to himself what made Lillie so awfully dull. "Can't she see that I am trying to talk for myself, the stupid little beauty?"

"Pardon me, Miss Baine," he said, looking squarely at her, "if I am over frank, but for some unaccountable reason, I feel I must say just whatever my impulses dictate to-day. I do not know why it is, but it seems to me that I have known you from your childhood days, instead of only since school commenced."

"Well, now, isn't it strange," said Lillie, "that you should have such queer feelings as that? Are you sure you are quite well to-day? You look a little flushed, as if you might be feverish. Wouldn't it be too bad if you should be taken down with a long spell of sickness, and your hair all come out? But maybe it would come in nice and wavy, like Mr. Pembrooke's."

Lin was almost exasperated at this cool reception of his feverish ardor, and before he could think what he ought to say, Lillie commenced again:

"If you should be taken down sick, Mr. Brinkerhoff, that aristocratic Mr. Pembrooke would be at the head of our class, and that would make him feel terribly stuck up."

"Miss Baine," said Lin, with great earnestness, "we are friends, are we not, and can be very confidential?"

"Friends!" said Lillie with an astonished look? "No, indeed. Mamma says nobody can be friends until they have known each other ever so long, a year or two, any-

way. We are classmates and acquaintances, but not friends yet, Mr. Brinkerhoff."

Lin thought this was rather hard luck, but yet there was something in her musical voice which said to him, "Hope on, hope on; don't be too easily discouraged."

"I thought," he went on, in half-soliloquy, "that we were friends."

"No," replied Lillie, "not friends yet, but I hope we will be by the time we graduate. Really, though, Mr. Brinkerhoff, I almost forgot we were not friends. I think the reason I forgot was because you talked so strangely to me, but you must be more prudent in the future."

"I said nothing," remonstrated Lin, "that even acquaintances might not with propriety say to one another. Do you think I did?"

"I don't know," said Lillie, sighing so sweetly that Lin was almost desperate, "I will tell the matron, Mrs. Bethel, when we go back to lunch, and ask her what she thinks of it."

"Oh, hang Mrs. Bethel!" said Lin, angrily.

"Why, Mr. Brinkerhoff." said Lillie, looking in open-eyed astonishment at him, "what in the world would you hang her for?"

Lin was unable to answer for a moment, and turned away his head. He was heartily ashamed of himself for letting his anger get away with him. Lillie, the mischievious elf, had no intention of telling the matron, and Lin, had he been less blind, would have known it. She, like many another young lady in early life heartily enjoyed what school girls call "teasing." Her quick, perceptive faculties, had weeks before told her of Lin's school-boy infatuation, and in a certain way she exulted in the power she had over him. A better or more noble-hearted young lady could not be found anywhere, and her conscience began to jerk and twinge a little, telling her that she had gone far enough.

Lin finally recovered himself sufficiently to say that "he was just in fun and that he would not for any consideration have the matron hung, but," he continued,

"in order that you may know just how I do feel, I will follow up my frank form of speech, and tell you—"

"Oh! There come the girls," exclaimed Lillie, hastily rising, "and they are calling us to come to lunch."

On their way back to the lake bank, where the lunch baskets were left, Lin said he would consider it a special favor if Miss Baine would forego mentioning his remarks to Mrs. Bethel.

"Will you promise never to talk that way again?" said sedate Lillie.

"Never," said Lin, "never again."

"Because, Mr. Brinherhoff," she went on in the demure tones of a little Quakeress, "it makes me feel so awfully queer."

This being settled between them, Lin felt in better spirits, and in that confidential way of his that was so common with him he said, "I will tell you a good joke, Miss Baine, that could be played on my room-mate, Mr. Pembrooke."

"How?" asked Lillie.

"You see," replied Lin, "he is inclined to be very religious, and if we could just get the professor to ask him to return thanks when we seat ourselves at lunch, it would be the event of the day."

"Do you think," asked Lillie, looking straight into Lin's face, "that he would return thanks if the professor should ask him to?"

"Oh, yes, that he would, and with as much dignity as you ever saw the ceremony performed."

Lillie turned away her head a little, pained to think that Mr. Brinkerhoff could be so hard on any one. In truth, she thought quite well of him, notwithstanding she had just teased him wretchedly, but she revolted at the idea of becoming a party to such a scheme as Lin had proposed, and without thinking why she made such a reply, said: "No, I do not think I would want any such a joke as that played on Mr. Pembrooke. He is aristocratic, I know, but then—I rather like him, for all that."

She watched Lin's face as the color came and went,

and then she knew his weak point. Lin Brinkerhoff was jealous of Mr. Pembrooke. "It is capital," she said to herself. "Now I do know how to tease him to my heart's content."

Lin was prevented from making her any reply, as others joined them just then, so he contented himself by biting his lips until the blood almost came.

Mrs. Bethel declared, as they gathered around the cloth, that their boisterous talking and laughing sounded more like a lot of wild children, than like young ladies and gentleman from Chalmer University.

"Where is Mr. Pembrooke?" asked Lillie, glancing around.

"He is out boating," replied the professor, "I waved my handkerchief to him, and I think he will soon be here."

"What if he was to get drowned?" said one of the young ladies.

Lillie shot a quick glance at Lin, and she saw, or thought she did, at least, a triumphant gleam mask itself about his face, and then quickly disappear as if it had never been.

The professor observed that Mr. Pembrooke was a very skillful oarsman, and he did not think there was any danger.

Lillie quickly rose to her feet, and after asking the matron to excuse her, withdrew. She tripped lightly down toward the lake, where she could see out over the waters, and discovered Pen, with slow and easy strokes, sending the skiff like a winged bird over the smooth surface shoreward. "How I would like," thought she, "to go out riding with such a skillful oarsman. I wonder if he would take me? I will just ask him, that is what I will do. I don't care if he has got the future Mrs. Pembrooke already picked out." In the meantime Pen effected a landing and sprang lightly up the beach of grass-covered earth, and was face to face with Lillie before he saw her. His first impulse was to greet her as he would a sister, for in truth, as she stood there before him, she looked so like her old self that day in the stage coach. But judgment soon triumphed over impulse, and he bowed stiffly.

"Mr. Pembrooke," said Lillie, in her sweetest voice, "won't you recognize an old acquaintance?"

"This is Miss Baine, I believe," said Pen taking her extended hand in his.

"Yes, sir," said Lillie, "and I don't think we ought to be quite so reserved, while we are classmates, anyway."

"Perhaps not," said Pen, and as they both turned to join the remainder of the party he thought to himself, "Surely she is a deceitful fraud to talk about me behind my back as she did and then purr around in this way."

"Mr. Pembrooke, I wish to ask a favor of you."

"Well," said Pen.

"I want you," said Lillie, "to take me boat riding after dinner, won't you, please?"

"Certainly, Miss Baine, if you wish it."

"Now," said Lillie, determined to break the crust of dignified reserve which surrounded her classmate, "don't say a word to any of the rest of them that we are going, or they will want to go along, and I am afraid to go if there is anybody but just you and I in the boat."

Pen looked furtively at her, but could not, from any expression her face wore, understand what had come over this fashionable young lady. They soon found places at the cloth, and partook of a hearty dinner. Every young lady and gentleman had something to say to him, and before he had finished his lunch he felt better acquainted with his classmates than he supposed he would be at the end of the year.

After dinner they gathered around the professor, exhibiting their fern specimens and bunches of moss.

Lillie had kept an eye on Master Lin, and was more than satisfied at that gentleman's discomfiture, and the more he scowled the more she had to say to Mr. Pembrooke.

Lillie came to Pen after the professor was through making his comments, and said, softly, "Come on, now, Mr. Pembrooke, you know what you promised me."

Pen turned and they walked down to where the boat was moored, and soon they were speeding away on the waters. Those on shore discovered them presently, and

the young ladies waved their handkerchiefs and the young gentlemen their caps, all excepting one, Lin Brinkerhoff—he did not wave his hat nor join in a single huzza.

"Oh! isn't this lovely, Mr. Pembrooke," said Lillie, looking up at him with her most bewitching smile.

"I think," replied Pen, "that boating is always pleasant."

Lillie gazed far away over the smooth waters, and Pen busied himself adjusting the sail and pulling at the oars.

This October Saturday was a regular Indian summer day. A hazy mist threw its veil-like sheen over the sun, and dimmed its dazzling brightness.

"How strange the sun looks," observed Lillie.

Pen rested his oars, and said it looked like a big red wheel in the sky—looked as if the hazy smoke might be a cloud of vapor rising from an ocean of blood.

"Oh, what a comparison, Mr. Pembrooke! By-the-way, do you not think this is far more pleasant than riding in a stage-coach?"

Pen turned and looked quickly at his fair companion and after a moment said, "The most pleasant ride I ever had, at least the one I think of oftenest, Miss Baine, was in an old lumbering stage-coach."

"Do you refer to the time you rode a few miles with mamma and me?" she asked, seemingly with great candor.

"Not with you, Miss Baine, as you are now, but as you were then," replied Pen, quickly.

"Do you think, Mr. Pembrooke, that I am so greatly changed since then?"

"Yes," he replied, "in many ways."

"In what way am I changed," she asked.

"You are taller then you were then," he replied, "and, if I mistake not, have taken up with many fashionable, worldly ways. You will please excuse my frankness, Miss Baine."

Lillie bit her lips and her handsome eyes fairly flashed for a moment, but she quickly composed herself, and, although she felt his criticism keenly, determined not to let him see that she did.

"I don't know, Mr. Pembrooke, how much I have changed, but surely it is very little compared to the change in yourself."

Lillie felt much better after she had delivered herself of this speech, and waited for Pen to reply, but as no reply came, after a few moments she said: "We are classmates now, Mr. Pembrooke, and notwithstanding the change for the worse you discover in me, I think we at least ought to be sociable, especially to day when we came to the woods and this beautiful lake on purpose to enjoy ourselves." Lillie was prompted to make this speech more perhaps to have Pen on friendly terms with her, so that she could more effectually worry and tease Lin Brinkerhoff, than from any other motive, but after she had said it she felt that it indeed was the true dictates of her womanly instincts, and notwithstanding Pen's cutting criticism, she wished him for her friend.

"Miss Baine," said Pen, "no one could wish more ardently than myself that I could be on friendly and sociable terms with all my classmates, but it is such a hard matter for me to break down the natural barriers of reticence and backwardness with which I am beset that I no doubt appear odd at times, but I am never lonely. Some days the lessons are so hard that I have no spare time whatever. Again they are easier, and when they are, I read books, outside of our regular studies."

"There is my hand, Mr. Pembrooke," said Lillie triumphantly, "we will be friends to day, anyway."

As Pen took her hand in his he repeated, "Yes, for to day."

Before Pen's answer died away, Lillie commenced singing in a soft melodious voice—

"Fair laughs the morn, and soft the zephyr blows,
While, proudly riding o'er the azure realm,
In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes."

"Boating, Mr. Pembrooke, always makes me feel happy. How does it make you feel?"

"It reminds me of the journey of life," replied Pen. "You see," he went on, "we are quite a long distance

from shore, and the breeze that is blowing constantly carries us noiselessly on and on, farther away. We have drifted out here without hardly noting our course or whither we were going. If, however, I draw in the sail here and loosen it there, our little craft turns its course shoreward and the eager wind kisses the sail as enthusiastically as before, notwithstanding we are going almost squarely against it. So, Miss Baine, do months and years of our lives glide silently away and we can hardly realize that we are no longer children, but have arrived at mature years, and sooner or later must take our places on the great stage of life, and assume such responsibilities as may be our lot. Fortunes may be lost, but if the children of men would but pinion their sails aright they will be able to battle against the losing winds of adversity, as we are battling against an adverse wind now, and eventually change them into Winning Winds, and successfully moor their barks into the one great harbor of safety, as our little craft is mooring now."

"I like to hear you talk like that, Mr. Pembrooke, but I doubt very much if I ever accomplish very much in this big world."

A few vigorous strokes with the oars brought them up to the mooring. Pen assisted Lillie ashore, and while he made the boat fast, she sprang gracefully up the mossy banks, then, turning, extended her slender hand to him. Although he did not need it, yet he accepted Lillie's proffered aid gratefully. "Thank you, that is capital," said Pen.

"Is that all you would say to me," asked Lillie, innocently, "if I was not changed a bit since that time you saw me in the stage coach?"

Pen came back to where she stood, and taking both her hands in his said: "If the little golden-tressed girl of long ago had not grown away from herself, and was here by me as you are now, I would say to her, 'I wish it could always be thus,—for me to row you over the stream of life and you to stand ready to greet me with a smile and helping hand, reaching down and helping me up, and up, to a better life as we journeyed on together, with a firm and abiding faith in Him, who rules over all."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE INIMITABLE'S WEDDING.

WHEN Lin Brinkerhoff went away from Hampton to commence his collegiate course at Chalmer University, the fact was at once reported to the Chicago attorney, Mr. Westover, who in turn reported it to Mr. Stephen Baine, who immediately wrote back to Lawyer Westover that his suspicions of five years ago were just as strong as ever. He firmly believed that Lin Brinkerhoff knew where the money went to, and he desired a detective to follow him up at once and note his style of living, and see if he did not have considerable money for a young man of his circumstances. The attorney wrote at once to Burt Lester, the detective, who, immediately after receiving the letter, went to Chicago and had a long conversation with the attorney relative to carrying out Mr. Baine's wish in having a detective look after young Brinkerhoff at Covesville.

Burt protested, however, that it was a useless expense, for, said he, "Very shortly will I be able to prove to you and Mr. Baine that my first impression of this tedious case was correct. Three days ago, Mr. Willets, the man who has the money—I will stake my reputation as a detective that I am correct—left Hampton and went to Cinapolis. I followed, shadowing him, and learned facts that promise to be important keys in unraveling this mystery."

Mr. Westover was all attention, and when Burt got as far as the word "mystery" he could remain quiet no longer. "Give me your hand, Mr. Lester," he shouted, "until I congratulate you. I have felt in my very bones from the first that you would run down our man, but I swear it has been devilish slow work. But tell me what clue did you catch in Cinapolis?"

"Why, this," said Burt, "Mr. Willets purchased a diamond ring and a very expensive set of jewelry, the total cost of which was nine hundred odd dollars, for

which he paid spot cash. I have a certificate here from the express agent at Cinapolis that he sent a small package of valuables to Miss Tobias. She, by the way, is a lady acquaintance of mine, in fact, a cousin, her mother being an own sister of my father's. Unfortunately, she has formed a very great attachment for this man Willets —I believe they are betrothed."

"Is that," said the lawyer, "the link you have discovered ?"

"It is," replied the detective, confidently.

"Then another failure awaits you," said Mr. Westover.

"And pray, why ?" asked Burt.

"Why? It is no evidence," replied the attorney. "He works all the time and has no one to support but himself, and, no, doubt, made these purchases from his savings."

"There you are mistaken," said Burt. "You don't know the man. Edward Willets is like a new play put on the boards. He 'must be seen to be appreciated.' During all these years that I have known him, he has been wretchedly hard up. Pecuniary embarrassments are as natural to him as the very air he breathes."

"What does he do with his money ?" asked Mr. Westover.

"That is the question, sir, that stumps us all," replied Burt.

"Well, I will enlighten you, then," said the lawyer, while a triumphant smile played on his face. "He hoards it up. He knows, Mr. Lester, that he is suspected, and for that very reason he plays the hard-up dodge."

"I believe I am right, Mr. Westover," said Burt, brushing his forehead as if to brush away the veil that shrouded the mystery.

The next day the detective returned to Hampton, and Harry Baine at once upon his arrival told him how the Inimitable Willets had been displaying a large roll of bills the evening before. A few days after this, Burt received word from Mr. Westover that the services of a detective had been secured to look after Lin Brinkerhoff.

Harry had written to his father in the meantime that he guessed it was a useless expense, for he now believed it was Edward Willets who had the missing money.

In reply to this Mr. Stephen Baine said if it was either of the suspected parties, he was satisfied it was young Brinkerhoff.

Thus they waited and watched, until the winter and spring had passed away, and the summer vacation of Chalmer University came around.

Lin during all this time, had kept Lillie Baine and Pen in a cloudy misunderstanding. Lin held the first place in his class, and at the closing exercises out-did even himself. Every professor in the University said he was certainly a brilliant young man. Then there came the good-by at parting, as they hurried away to their homes to greet dear ones there.

Grandfather Pembrooke and his household gave Pen the warmest of receptions. Little Bertha was now seven years old, and was almost idolized by them all.

About a week after his return home, 'Rilla came to him one day and gave him a square, unsealed envelope, and on opening it he found it to be a formal invitation to her wedding. She and the Inimitable Edward Willets were to be married in about ten days from then.

She stood by his side with one hand resting on his shoulder, while he opened and read it.

"I feel that you are my brother, Pen, and I come to hear what you think of my choice."

"Ah, 'Rilla, if he is your choice, know now and always that he is mine. Mr. Willets is a generous man. I never will forget how he gave me the last cent he had when I was banished from my old home."

"You think he is honest and upright, do you not," asked 'Rilla.

"Indeed I do," said Pen, promptly, "and with such a true, good woman as you are, my dear sister, he will be all you could expect in any man."

"You must not compliment me, Pen," said 'Rilla, as she smoothed back the locks from his finely-chiseled forehead. "I do not ask that, but tell me—will you think just as much of him if he is a laboring man? You

know, my brother, you will be rich when you inherit this old home and the many broad acres that belong with it."

"If you would be my sister, 'Rilla, do not for a moment think that because a man is poor in wordly goods I would ever think the less of him for it. Great riches and wealth ever have, and always will, warp the hearts of men, until their every gesture all too plainly says, 'I am holier than thou.' The laboring man, dear sister, it matters not what his occupation may be, is free from this warping influence. Riches cause men to forget their God in their greed and love for Mammon. A true Christian heart not unfrequently beats under the greasy and shabby coat of the poor laborer who works in the shops and foundries all over our land, and the most poorly-paid brakeman on the railway train may have richer stores laid up in Heaven than the millionaire who owns a controlling interest in the road."

"I am glad, Pen, you feel that way. I received a letter from Edward yesterday, and he says we may expect Uncle Tim Mannahan and Uncle George Tobias most any time now."

"What," asked Pen, "has been the cause of their staying so long in England?"

"Come," said 'Rilla, "to this rustic seat, and I will tell you." They seated themselves under the shade of the self same tree where Pen had first met Grandfather Pembrooke, and then 'Rilla went on to explain how an Englishman by the name of Harlan Barretson, a distant relative of Uncle Timothy Mannahan, had gotten possession of the estate through fraud, and they had been having Chancery proceedings ever since he went over, six years ago, and had at last gotten it settled in Uncle Tim's favor, and that Uncle George Tobias was an important witness, and hence had remained. "Now, brother, I will tell you a secret. Uncle George Tobias and Mrs. Bethel have been corresponding ever since that time you and he accompanied her home with her two little boys from Cinapolis, and are to be married very soon after he returns. Uncle Tim has sold his estate in England, and proposes to purchase himself a pleasant

country home near the Mills, and Uncle George is to have his old farm where Mrs. O'Riley lived."

"I am truly glad," said Pen, "that such kindness is being shown to Tobs, as your Uncle George was called at the McGuffin farm. He was very kind to me. Nearly every night he would steal up into my room, and we would visit far into the night, and would always read a chapter in this very Bible," said Pen, drawing from his pocket the treasure he had carried for so many years.

"I am glad," said 'Rilla, "that he was so kind to you."

"Yes, he was always very kind," said Pen, "although he it was who put me in a box that fatal night I left the Phenomenal's farm, which proved to be the coffin that buried me from the world during those dreary months I was with old Hinchey."

"Perhaps," said 'Rilla, "God in His wisdom sent you there to save poor Richard, for save him you did."

"No, no, my sister," replied Pen; "I may have been the humble instrument that our Saviour employed to bring about Richard's reformation, but it was He, not me, who caused Richard to forsake his miserable life of dissipation, and turn his face Zionward.'

While Pen was speaking, 'Rilla buried her face on his shoulder, and could not speak, so full were her thoughts of Richard's reformation.

Her thankfulness welled up in her throat when she thought of her now reformed brother, who once was so wayward, just as she choked up that time six years ago when he was restored to her in the pleasant shade of the very tree where they were now seated.

Finally she looked up, and through her womanly tears, said:

"Ah! Pen, it was like claiming the dead back to life when Richard came home,"—again she buried her face; she could say no more, but the glistening tears told the story of a glad heart which rejoices to think that the chains of intemperance had been broken from one so near to her.

The following days glide swiftly by, and finally the day breaks that is to witness the marriage of Edward Willets and 'Rilla Tobias. The evening comes on, and Grandfather Pembrooke's New England home is alive with the invited guests.

Bright lights are sparkling from the windows this evening, throwing their long rays of light without, far into the darkness, and within causing a ruddy glow to fall cheerfully over the soft carpets and hanging pictures.

If phantom faces of those long since in the spirit world flit about and peer in at the windows, no one within is the wiser of it.

Edward Willets, the Inimitable, whom we have seen pass through so many darkening pecuniary embarrassments, aye, and witnessed him pass under the cloud of suspicion, which still hovers over him, is the happy groom.

The train arrives at Greenwood at 8 o'clock P. M. It is eight o'clock now, and Richard has wheeled away to the station for him, and while we wait his return let us take a peep at the company within.

There sits Grandfather Penbrooke in his easy chair, radiant and happy. His long, white beard and snowy hair is as spotless as the bride's veil. By his side is Kittie, who is growing handsomer with the ripening touch of passing years. Ah, who is this that joins her, and stops to patronizingly say a word to the old man. Can we be mistaken? No, indeed, it is our detective friend Burt Lester, who looks as radiant and happy as he stands there by Kittie's side as if he had at last found the golden key that would unlock the mystery box where Uncle Stephen Baine's money during all these years had been concealed.

The rumble of carriage wheels are heard, and a moment more steps are coming up the walk. Then the door bell rings out a nervous clang, as if the one ringing it had an ague shake. Presently Edward Willets is announced, and he steps into the room. His lengthy figure is gorgeously attired, and he wears a handsome buttonhole bouquet.

"Mr. Willets," says Granfather Pembrooke, extending his hand, "how do you do?"

"Never felt better in my life, thank you," replied the Inimitable, clasping the old man's hand in a warm embrace.

"You look flushed and warm," said the old man.

"There is, then," said Willets, "a remarkable similarity between my feelings and my looks, for I cannot deny that I am deucedly hot."

"Faith, sure, and how is the groom, I don't know," said a voice at his side, and turning, Willets found himself face to face with Tim Mannahan and George Tobias.

"Hit looks sort o' natural, you know, to see you about," said our old friend Tobs.

Willets shook hands with his uncles in turn and declared it was by far the happiest hour of his life, "and should I make a wish, sirs," said he, "it would be that none of us ever see a less enjoyable hour than the present." Pen came up just then, and after greeting Willets warmly, conducted him away into another room, for the hour was at hand when the marriage rite was to be solemnized. The ceremony was to take place in the large parlor. A little later the folding doors were thrown open and the guests assembled.

'Rilla was clad in a dress of pure white. Her luxuriant hair was braided, and white roses were twined in the braids. On one slender finger blazed a glittering diamond ring, it being the identical one that Burt Lester saw Willets purchase in Cinapolis. The radiant glow from the chandelier fell on her brow and braids of golden hair, causing her to look very beautiful. A half smile wreathed her lip with a trembling joyousness, as she stood by the side of him in whose hands she was consigning her life. A casual observer might have fancied that the Inimitable wore rather a grave countenance, especially for one usually so glowing. The clergyman pronounced a few solemn words, and Edward Willets was the husband of the noble woman at his side.

The half-smile on 'Rilla's face disappeared, and she grew deadly pale as the irrevocable vows trembled on

her lips. She seemed to realize that her own life from that time on was blended with another's and forever after theirs was one common destiny.

She was now a wife. Would she be his companion? How many are wives in name, but after a little while cease to be companions?

A wife should be brave and self-reliant enough to contend with some difficulties for herself, rather than seeking always to weary the husband with every little annoying detail of domestic trial, and yet in matters of serious import have a companion strong and true to whom they can come for sympathy and help.

"Affection ceases when labor becomes a drudgery."

The congratulations were then bestowed, and soon after the Inimitable and his lady gathered with the guests around a bountifully filled board, and amid the unrestrained merriment and witticisms, partook of the marriage feast.

Pen sat at the Inimitable's right, and when the happy participants grew jovial in hilarious conversation, he turned to Pen and said:

"My charming friend, this is what I call gorgeous. The gods themselves were highly blest, if they ever partook of such delicacies. At such a board as this, sir, the mythological old Greeks and early Romans—far more human, I have often thought, than divine—might have tarried forever and never tired."

"You are as rich as ever, Mr. Willets, in compliments," said Pen.

"Ah! my dear sir," said Willets, "the excitement of the occasion has so cramped, as it were, my conversational powers that I am wholly unable to express myself with that fluency which the 'signs of the times' warrant, but I will say, my dear Pen, that my stock is more valuable than ever. I feel as if the dark valley into which I was so ruthlessly precipitated, at my parents' death, was a thing of the past, and now I have climbed above the clouds of pecuniary troubles."

"I am truly glad," said Pen, that you feel so hopeful."

"And I," said the Inimitable, "am glad of the hope

that is within me. But sir," he went on, "it was a dark, cold, and unsympathetic world in which I floundered so long, on the ragged edge of financial disaster, and hope-deserted despair. There is an old saying that 'every dog has his day,' and this evening verifies its correctness. But, sir, there have been days, months, and years of my pecuniary embarrassed and benighted life, that caused me to adhere rigidly to the belief that the saying was incorrect, and that there were actually more dogs than days."

The hour passed pleasantly away, and when the guests returned to the parlors, Kittie Pembrooke seated herself at the piano by request, and favored them with some beautiful ballads, sung only as she could sing them. Burt Lester, in his gallantry, stood by her side and turned the music. When she had finished, he bent low and whispered :

"'Awake, and let me dream again.'"

"Haven't you forgotten that old song?" asked Kittie, looking beamingly at her companion.

"No, strange as it may seem, I have not," replied Burt, "neither" he went on, "have I forgotten that I have one more question to ask when this long and tedious case of mine is done with."

"But you have forgotten," said Kittie, mischievously, "that I have found my brother, now, and 'Rilla has found her husband, and possibly my interest languishes." Saying this she arose from the instrument and with a provoking laugh joined the company, some of whom were preparing to take their leave. Thus the evening passed away.

Ah, how much that word "married" means. Of the three important epochs, Birth, Marriage and Death, it is the merriest, yet the most solemn. The history of one, from there on, is inter-twined and bound up in the history of the other.

Many elements in nature have no affinity for one another, so also, do we find many who are incongenial to us. The sacredness of the marriage pledge should be paramount, however, to all else.

Let no man cruelly trample the irrevocable vows breathed at the altar underneath his feet, and then com-

plain of unhappiness in the years to come; for come it will, like an overtaking tide washing ashore the wreck of broken vows.

Ever and ever in his unhappiness will he be traveling toward the darkness, leaving the sunlight of happiness behind. The shadow of his wrongs and misdeeds will ever be before him and though he were as fleet of foot as a bird in flight, yet will he never be able to pass the shadowy phantoms of broken pledges.

By one way only can he leave it behind, and that is to turn his face Zionward, and travel back to the high hill of pure deeds.

The love of a pure, good woman is a precious boon to any man. It is as the diamond compared with rough rocks from the quarry. Coarser stones may be cemented together again if riven apart, but the diamond's lustre is forever marred when once broken.

Women, too, have deep abysses which they should shun. The fetters of fashion and the love of display are hard task-masters, yet faithfully served by heartless, soulless wives and mothers all over our land. They all too often abandon the noble mission of being true companions to their husbands and true mothers to their little ones. The fashion book of dress is their Bible, and they are its fawning, submissive slaves. They become deserters from their homes, wholly neglecting and trampling under foot the sacred vows that made them in name a wife.

The husband and growing sons are deprived of the companionship of wife and mother, and soon they become reckless, and then depravity overtakes them. Their very hearts become calloused over with a secret sorrow. They grow prematurely old in trying to hide their empty affections from the world.

God help this class of blindly erring women to awake from the dazzling stupor of their folly, and turn their faces to the hearth-stone of their homes, with true womanly and motherly instincts. Help them to understand that the love of fashion and gaudiness is a social evil of stupendous magnitude. Help them to forsake all this, and seek the sanctuary of their husbands' hearts,

and relight them with a new hope, become their companions in truth, and lovingly clasp the little darlings that gather about them to their breasts and exclaim through tears of penitence, "These are my idols."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

PEN VISITS HIS OLD HAMPTON HOME.

A FEW days later the friends whom we have learned to know received cards from Covesville announcing the marriage of Mr. George Tobias and Mrs. Bethel. Her two sons remained at Chalmer University to attend that honored institution, while Mr. and Mrs. Tobias set out for the Mills, where they proposed, as well as Tim Mannahan, that they should make their future home.

A few days were spent at Hampton visiting with Zurilda Goodsil, also with Harry Baine, nor must we slight another household which now holds forth at this place. It is Mr. and Mrs. Edward Willets. They have a very pretty cottage, neatly painted, not far away from Pen's old home. The two old oak trees are still there, their leaves regularly budding with the spring, maturing in the summer, and dropping off and blowing away with the chilling winds of winter.

'Rilla tells how her flowers are to be arranged in the little yard in front, the following spring. She says that Edward is so fond of flowers, and she wants the home he so kindly gave her to ever wear its most attractive look for him.

"Did you say," queried Aunt Zurilda, who was present, "that Mr. Willets gave you this place?"

"Oh! yes," replied 'Rilla, "he purchased it before we were married, and as soon as we came to Hampton the foolish fellow insisted in putting it in my name."

Zurilda Goodsil soliloquizes to herself that she didn't know, for her life, where Mr. Willets got so much money, and thinks it looks suspicious, leastways to her.

On a certain afternoon, about a week after this, Pen received two letters. Richard had been to the village and brought them. He had a book in his hand when the letters were handed to him, and after thanking Richard, he continued his walk and finally descended the old stone steps to the terrace below. Then he broke the seal and read one of them. It was from Harry Baine, and read as follows:

"DAIRYFIELD FARM, August 3d, 18—.

"Dear Pen:

"From the enclosed invitation you will see that I am soon to be married to Miss Emily Willets. You may say, 'poor blind Emily,'—I do myself, but it was no idle love I gave her long years ago. It is now over six years since we were betrothed. After she lost her sight, it was her expressed wish that the engagement be broken off, but I found as the months and years went by that I loved her as tenderly as ever.

'In those sunken eyes the grief of years I trace,
And sorrow seems acquainted with her face.'

"The same old songs she used to sing, she sings yet, only with a deeper sweetness in her rich voice than ever. We will live with Mr. Willets, her brother, so long as we tarry at Hampton. It is not necessary for me to say how happy 'Rilla—kind-hearted woman!—is, in anticipation of having her sister-in-law and schoolmate come to live at Hampton.

"I extend a pressing invitation to your sister Kittie, Richard, and yourself. You will be starting back to Covesville soon, why not come to Cinapolis, be present at our marriage, and then come on to Hampton and visit your old home until the school term opens at the University? My people all join in sending kind regards. Lillie says to tell you to be sure and come.

"Very truly and sincerely yours,

"HARRY BAINE."

"Ah, noble-hearted Harry Baine!" said Pen, as he folded up the letter; "how many would have been as

true and generous to a poor blind girl. Handsome Emily Willets! is it possible that she, my teacher of long ago, is blind? What a lesson it teaches. Nothing is independent of God's will. In an hour the beauteous flush of perfect health may be banished for the paleness of death. The beauty of youth fades with the years. The most silken or jetty hair will fade to one common color. Ah, how true and impressive are those lines of Shakespeare's, where he says,—

'Beauty's a doubtful good, a glass, a flower;
Lost, faded, broken, dead within an hour.'

It is the soul of man that alone survives the changing vicissitudes of this world, and lives on and on forever, It is immortal, and while tarrying in our earthly bodies, it is for the time separated from its parent source—our Creator. I sometimes think the noblest words ever uttered by Hannah Moore were those where, in speaking of the soul, she says—

'The soul on earth is an immortal guest,
Compelled to starve at an unreal feast;
A pilgrim panting for the rest to come·
An exile, anxious for his native home.'"

Pen picked up his book and bent his steps in search of Kittie, forgetting all about the unopened letter in his pocket. As he walked along he wondered if Lillie would not come to Cinapolis with her brother. The more he thought of it, the more he thought that she surely would come. It was arranged that Pen would go alone to Cinapolis. Richard had no desire to ever see that city again. Kittie would have liked very much to go, but Grandfather Pembrooke was now so old and childish that she knew he would be miserable should she go away. At the appointed time, Pen bid Grandfather and Kittie good-by. Richard brought the carriage around, ready to drive him to the station.

"Wait a moment, Richard," said Pen, "until I find Bertha. I don't see where the gypsy could have gone to."

"I will go," said Kittie, "and try to find her."

"You needn't go looking for me, for I am right here," said the little lady as she appeared on the porch, all dressed to go riding. "Its awful mean of you, Pen," she continued, "to go away so soon ; and then you never asked me to go to Greenwood Station with you. But I am going, anyway."

"My dear little Bertha," said Pen, "I am very sorry I forgot to invite you, but you shall go along with us, and I warrant you cannot enjoy my company more than I do yours."

When the station was reached, Pen found he only had time to purchase his ticket and get his baggage checked before the train would be in. This done, he hurried back to the carriage to bid Richard good-by, and then take his little sister in his arms and kiss her rosy lips, protesting all the time to weeping Bertha that he would much prefer remaining at home if it were possible. As Pen was whirled away toward Cinapolis, he took Harry Baine's letter from his pocket, and re-read it, and fell into a reverie concerning Lillie Baine.

"Of course she is not what she promised to be when a little girl," he thought. "She is too worldly to suit me. When I am with her I almost forget that she is so terribly deceitful. I do not believe there is another young lady in our whole class that would be guilty of talking behind my back as she does, and then have the audacity to appear so open and frank, and even friendly, to my face. I will," thought he, "just have a good, earnest talk with her, if she comes to Cinapolis with her brother, and tell Miss Lillie, as I would my own sister, of her fault, and also explain how it pains me to know of her two-faced behavior. She may get very angry with me for my pains, but I would much rather she did not speak at all, than to utter falsehoods in her every word and look. She don't like me ; thinks I am aristocratic, when God knows I am not, and then makes fun of my diminutive stature. Why am I drawn so irresistibly toward her, anyway ? She is not the Lillie Baine of long ago. My ideal, I fear, is destined never to find its reality."

When Cinapolis was at last reached, Pen was highly pleased to find Harry Baine at the depot.

"I expected you on this train," he said, as he grasped Pen's hand.

"It was very kind of you," replied Pen "to meet me."

They engaged a cab, and just as they were being rapidly driven away, Pen suddenly exclaimed, "Look there! look there!" in a greatly excited voice, as he clutched Harry's arm.

"What? where? what is it?" asked Harry, in a bewildered way.

"Oh, Harry," said Pen, trembling in every joint, "I saw old Hinchey."

Quick as possible Harry thrust his head out of the cab window, and shouted to the driver to "hold on." He then gave him orders to drive back to the depot.

Both Harry and Pen kept a sharp lookout, and had the cab-man drive two or three times back and forth, but all to no avail. No one even resembling him could be seen.

Then they set out for Mr. Dorris's, talking of nothing else but old Hinchey, and wondering if it were indeed him. As they drew near their destination, they heard Emily Willets singing that old song she had sung years before for Pen on that evening but one, after Richard returned from a visit at Hampton. Then Harry Baine was in hearing distance, as she plaintively sang the same words she is singing to-night—

"Oh, no! I never will grow old,
Though years on years roll by,
And silver o'er my dark brown hair,
And dim forever my laughing eye."

There was a happy meeting that night for Pen. Mrs. Dorris gave him a motherly welcome and Emily a sister's greeting.

"Do you think?" asked Emily, after she and Pen had conversed for some time together, "that I am greatly changed?"

"No," replied Pen, "I do not, and I confess I was very much surprised to see you looking so natural. Aside from those gold spectacles with dark glasses you wear, I can see no change in you whatever."

"How do you do, Mr. Pembrooke," said a familiar voice at his side, and looking up, he found Lillie Baine's hand of welcome extended, and her handsome face wreathed in smiles.

Their greeting was after the fashion of schoolmates, but nothing more, though each secretly thought they observed a heightening color mantle the face of the other.

"Lillie and I," said Emily, "have already become well acquainted."

"Indeed we have," exclaimed Lillie, as she smoothed back her sightless friend's luxuriant hair from her fair brow.

"I heard of you though, long ago," said Emily, as she reached up and took one of Lillie's white hands in hers, "I heard of you the first night I saw Pen. He spoke to me first of Lillie Baine."

Pen cast a hasty glance at Lillie, and then looked away half satisfied, for she was blushing deeply, and he well knew that he himself was coloring to the roots of his hair. Presently Emily laughed softly, and said teasingly, that she thought, then, that Pen's boyish heart was rather tender toward the little golden-tressed girl who gave him his Bible, and wondered if Mr. Pembrooke read it as much as he used to?

Pen was blushing now deeper than ever, and kept looking out of the window at the mellow rays of the August moon, hoping that Lillie would say something for an answer.

But she never said a word, and when Pen turned to answer for himself, he caught the triumphant glance that fell from Lillie's eyes, as if she were rejoicing at his confused and burning face.

"I read the Holy Bible, Miss Willets," Pen answered firmly, "every day of my life, because of the truths found therein." He was angry at himself for having

blushed at all, and angry at Lillie for her heartlessness in looking so triumphantly at him.

"Has the moon came up yet?" asked Emily.

"Oh, yes!" Lillie replied, "it is almost as light as day, isn't it, Mr. Pembrooke?"

"I do not presume," said Pen rather stiffly, "that Miss Willets cares for better authority than your own word."

"Better authority?" repeated Lillie, laughing in such a provoking way that Pen was almost exasperated. "I suppose," she went on, "if better authority is needed, you would be the one person to give it."

"I do not mean to use the word 'better,' but 'additional' authority," replied Pen.

"Come, come," said Emily, "if you two do not cease your sparring, I will play school teacher and punish somebody severely. I want some flowers from the yard, will you go and make up a bouquet for me?"

"Certainly," replied Lillie. "Mr. Pembrooke, will you please act as my escort? It would be lonely to go alone."

Pen made no audible reply, but accompanied her into the front yard that stretched down to the street. Bed after bed of fragrant flowers bordered the walks, and soon they had a beautiful bouquet gathered. When they started back to the house, Lillie slipped her arm confidingly through his, and in her sweetest voice said: "Come, Mr Pembrooke, we are friends, are we not? I don't mean anything by my jesting talk."

"Lillie," said Pen turning to her, "my greatest wish and prayer is that you do not mean much that you have said." His words were so earnest that Lillie could not reply, and again they walked on in silence.

Presently Lillie asked: "Are you angry with me for anything I have said? Truly, Mr. Pembrooke, I want you for my friend."

"No, not angry, only grieved," replied Pen, "and sometime after to-night I will tell you how much."

Ah, after to-night! but how long after, little did either guess.

When Pen sought his room to retire, he threw off his

coat, and as he did so a number of letters fell out. As he gathered them up he thought that Lillie Baine was perhaps not so much changed from her former self as he had imagined. In running the letters over, he was surprised to find one with the seal not yet broken. He hastily opened it. The letter was from Lin Brinkerhoff, and read as follows :

"HAMPTON, August 3rd, 18—

"Dear Pen :

"I am impatient to see you, for I have a secret to communicate. I feel like a brother toward you, and hope you reciprocate my feelings, and also will congratulate me upon the secret which I will now confide into your keeping. Did I not know your trustworthiness, I would never dare to reveal it. I am betrothed to Lillie Baine. We will not think of getting married, however, until after our college days are over. I want you for my brother and friend always, and think that in time I can win for you her friendship. Please return the letter to me for fear you might lose it. We have agreed to keep our betrothal a profound secret, but I cannot think of keeping it from you. You must be guarded, and never mention it to a living soul.

"Most sincerely your old chum,

"LIN BRINKERHOFF."

When Pen read this letter, he realized fully for the first time in his life that Lillie Baine, with all her faults, was the one woman in the whole world for whom his own deep affection burned. He crushed the letter in his hands, and even trampled it, but afterward he smoothed it out, and folding it carefully, put it away in his portmanteau. Long into the night he sat pondering over and over in his mind whether he should go on with college studies at Covesville, or go somewhere else. Long and earnestly he prayed for Divine help to know and do his duty. When the gray dawn of morning broke, it found him still walking his room. At last his set features relaxed, and the calm of his better decision mantled his face. He would forget this human affection. No one should ever be the wiser because of this sleep-

less night. "I will ever be on my guard, and Coleridge's lines shall not be true of me, where he says:

> 'In many ways does the full heart reveal
> The presence of the love it would conceal.'"

"There is a love that passes not away forever, and to Him will I ever turn and follow in the ways of Godliness. 'Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.'"

The wedding of Harry Baine and Emily Willets was a very quiet affair, no one but Mr. Daniel Lester's family being present. It was Emily's request that it should be so.

After the ceremony was over, Lillie and Pen were again walking among the flowers, gathering a large bouquet to take to 'Rilla, for they were to start on the evening train for Hampton.

"Do you think it strange, Mr. Pembrooke, that brother Harry would marry any one that is blind?"

"I do not," replied Pen, "for I firmly believe their whole affections are given to one another. Marriages," he went on, "frequently take place when this is not the case, then the white-winged messenger that hovers over the marriage altar is all too soon transformed, in a short time, to selfishness and cruel injustice to the true affection that may linger in the breast of either, and the sacredness of the vows disregarded."

"Why have you such faith in Brother Harry's marriage?"

"Because," replied Pen, "Emily is a true Christian woman in spirit and in truth, and where the pure love of our Saviour is found, there is no room for selfishness."

That evening the good-byes were said, and Harry and his bride, Pen and Lillie Baine started for Hampton. This was Pen's first visit to his old home since he was sent to the McGuffin farm. True, he had been back to Hampton once since then—that fatal night he fell into old Hinchey's hands.

The greetings that were extended them at Hampton we will not pause to describe, but will accompany Pen

in his visit, the following morning, to his old home and the scenes along the rocky stream so familiar to his youth.

Early the morning following their arrival, he bent his steps toward the old wood-colored cottage where still lived Aunt Zurilda. His beating heart kept time to his eager steps as he approached the old home—the home where he was born. There stood the two oak trees as large as life, and bent their huge boughs in the morning breeze in a friendly recognition, he fancied, to his coming. The old house looked natural, but seemed lower than it used to be. The fences, too, seemed to have sunken down since he first remembered them.

Ah! How well he remembered when he still wore dresses, and played about in this very yard. He had to throw his head far back then to see the top of the palings in the fence, as he stood tugging and pulling at the staves with his baby hands, and kicked them unmercifully with the copper toes of his first pair of shoes. There was the window of his little bed-room—the window-sill so low and near the ground, yet he well remembered when he was scarce tall enough to look over it. There also was the rockery he remembered seeing his father build—was it yesterday? It seemed so. But it was crumbling away, and many of the rocks had been thrown down. Ah! What monument can man build that will not at last become a ruin, and even memory fade away until his reality is lost in tradition.

Pen rapped gently at the door, for to him it was sacred, the handiwork of his father. The door was opened by Aunt Zurilda. Time had deepened the furrows of her face and silvered her hair with a deeper frost.

Pen waited a moment, and then said, "Aunt Zurilda, how do you do. Do you not remember me? Have I, aunt," said he, looking about him, "grown tall, instead of everything else around growing low?"

"Well, who be you, anyway?" asked the spinster aunt, good-naturedly, while a half-smile, mingled with suspense, lit up her face.

"It is unpoetic Pen."

"Pen! Is it possible that this is Pen?" ejaculated his aunt, while she at the same time gave him such another hugging as she had not given any one for years. "I do declare, Pen, I wouldn't have known ye, least ways I don't think I should. Law, but I am glad to see you."

"Thank you, aunt," said Pen. "I, too, am happy to see you and the dear old place again."

After they had conversed pleasantly for some time, the servant announced that breakfast was ready. Pen was given his old accustomed seat at the table, and greatly enjoyed the steaming breakfast. When the repast was over, he started out for a ramble through the woods. Aunt Zurilda first, however, made him promise that he would make his home with her while he remained in Hampton. "You shall," said she, "have your old bed-room that you used to sleep in when a child."

As he walked along he met old companions in the very rocks and trees that surrounded him. The little brook seemed narrower than it used to be. Now he could easily step across old familiar places that once seemed so wide to him.

"Ah," thought Pen, "what a halo of brightness invests our past when thus beckoned back from all else, to our childhood's haunts. These are the paths my childish feet trod when a merry, bare-footed, care-free boy. I used to think then a good many thorns beset some of them, for shoeless boys to travel, but, alas, I have found since; better broken tracks than these with thrice the thorns. On the golden harp of memory," mused Pen, "I have often heard these gurgling waters in their ceaseless summer song, and from their recollection I never will be divorced, though bitter waves break over me and gloomy shadows darken my sunshine of hope. The memory of these old haunts, during all these years of separation from them, has been the silken cord that pulled and tugged at my wandering feet until at last I loosened its tension by coming nearer."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

LIN BRINKERHOFF'S FIRST DISAPPOINTMENT.

SCHOOL commenced again at Chalmer University. Classes were hourly reciting, day after day, month after month, and year after year. Whosoever thinks when his or her college days commence that graduating day is away off toward the end of time will sooner or later, as the spindle of time whirls on, look back on those college days as the shortest of their lives.

The professors become as our fathers, and our fellow-students as brothers and sisters, while the old college itself is our "Alma Mater."

Perhaps, however, the greatest happiness we enjoy of a school life is the memory of it in after years, when its monotony has become lost from memory and forever buried with our own and our classmates' shortcomings.

Then the happy times and the sunny side of our associates are gilded over with burnished gold, which grows brighter and brighter with the receding years.

Perhaps the greatest disappointment we can be subjected to in after years, when our own locks tell the story of coming frosts, is to meet some favorite classmate who has ceased rowing on the river of time, and let his bark float carelessly and recklessly in the current of intemperance. Years ago, when commencement day was over, and we shook hands with him at parting, his face was beardless and his fair complexion untainted by the demon—strong drink. No greater disappointment can man feel than this, to meet in advanced years a ruined wreck of one so promising in youth. Ah, how many lives are but broken promises!

At Chalmer University, Lin Brinkerhoff held the first place in his class, and when after almost four years of school life had slipped away, he was the one selected to deliver the Valedictory Address. During these years he had grown some taller, and was a handsome, promising

ambitious man. Pen had also grown in stature, but was still the same religious man that he had ever been a boy. Lillie Baine was a bright, intelligent young lady, and a universal favorite among her classmates. She and Pen seldom, however, seemed to care for each other's society. The ruinous work of estrangement which Lin so artfully commenced, he had with surprising skill kept up. It cannot be said that Lillie Baine ever shunned Pen's company, no, not that, but she was made to feel, by his silent, moody reserve, that she could hold no thought in common with him. Irresistibly she was drawn toward him, however, like the incoming tide, and had Pen only known it took hard fighting on Lin Brinkerhoff's party to keep the waves back, but so far he had succeeded. If he was extravagant in deceitfulness and hard study, he certainly was not in a financial way. In fact, the detective who had been stationed to shadow him reported that no young gentleman with fourteen thousand dollars at his comman could be one half as economical as was he. Not a penny was ever spent foolishly, while both his dress and living were exceedingly plain. The shadow, after the first year, was relieved from his Covesville charge, and Lin, although none the wiser, was freed from a detective's guardianship.

One evening in early June, only two weeks before the graduating exercises were to take place, Pen invited Lin to go with him to prayer meeting.

"I would accompany you, Pen," was Lin's reply, "only that I have an engagement with Miss Baine. Permission has been given us to go riding, and I am going to squander the first dollar I have spent foolishly since I came to the University."

"You say you would go," observed Pen, "were it not for this engagement. Suppose you had no engagement, would you go then to please me, or because you are beginning to believe the Bible?"

"My dear friend," answered Lin, "I would go to please you, and for no other reason whatever."

Pen's face wore a pained expression, for he was sorry to hear Lin make such an answer.

"We are the same age, Pen," continued Lin, "but I

have seen some things in my searching among men and books that you seemingly have over-looked. Your God has never answered your prayers, Pen,—of this I am certain; and I tell you now there is no God and no hereafter. You are worshipping a myth—a shadow of tradition. The bubble that you fain would reach to for strength, is ever just beyond your grasp, and you will pant on with weariness in your eager, hopeless chase, until old age and death overtake you; and yet, from it you will receive no benefit.

"When I want anything, or have any secret ambition, I do not get down and pray for it. The winds would answer my prayer, if I did, as quickly as would your God. No, sir, that is not my way of doing business, but quietly I start to work, take the whole business into my own hands, trust to my own skill, depend on no one, and always win. The great ambition of my life was to graduate at some recognized college, and here I am only two weeks from commencement day."

"But," said Pen. "you have not graduated yet."

Lin started at his companion's words, as if he had been stung. Little did Pen think that he had uttered a prophecy. Little did he think that he had given utterance to a single half dozen words that would ring like the muffled toll of a bell in Lin's ears through the long years to come. "But you have not graduated yet."

"My faith," Pen went on. "teaches me to believe that evil is not for eternity. The prosperity that has its foundation on evil and disbelief, will sooner or later become a burden to the possessor. Why it is, Lin, that God, the Infinite, Allwise Creator, suffers evil to sweep like a tidal wave over the earth and into all classes of society, is not a question for me or any other finite creature to attempt to answer. It is a mystery that cannot be known by us."

"Look at your churches and church members," said Lin. "For instance, the fashionable churches found in our city, especially. The pews in some of them are put up and sold at such exorbitant prices that the poor man is crowded out, and he goes elsewhere. When he gets

elsewhere, he finds the same far-up-above-him feeling among, not only the aristocratic members, but also in the ministry.

"A man that can look on the pompous, self-sufficient air that a great many ministers extend toward the poor of their flock and not be utterly disgusted, is certainly very blind. Yet, however, the smooth broadcloth and rustling silk come near these ministers, and then see how quickly they bow down to what they term their influential members, and actually fawn about these possessors and lovers of Mammon like sycophants. You, Pen, may be foolishly in earnest. I believe you are candid in your views, yet, if you will search through and through all these different creeds, you will find that ninety-nine per cent. of them are specially interested in the aggrandizement of their own particular church and sect, and when not thus engaged, they are gossiping about and libeling other denominations. In fact, they actually hate every church but their own, yet they all claim the Bible is the rule and guide of their faith. Now, if this book, the Bible, is a divine revelation, how does it come, there is such a confusion of opinion regarding it, and so much bickering among those who profess to believe in it? These questions, Pen, are simply unanswerable, and so you need not try it, for I must be going."

"But, Lin, let me ask you one question," said Pen; "if there was a Judas among the chosen twelve, may we not reasonably expect to find Judases in these latter times, even where we least expect them?"

Lin winced noticeably at this question, for it had a peculiar significance to himself.

"I haven't time," he hastily answered, "to discuss the subject farther to-night."

As Lin hurried along the street, for the horse and carriage he had engaged for the evening, he thought of Pen's question, and wondered if his old playmate actually suspected anything, "Judases in these latter times, even where we least expect them." Then came Pen's strange remark, "But you have not graduated yet!" It kept ringing in his ears, and filled him with a dread and foreboding he could not shake off or dismiss from his

mind. Then he paused for a moment, and looking up to the star bedecked canopy, murmured to himself, "I do wish I had Pen's faith. There is nothing satisfactory in the whole field of my belief, or rather my disbelief, and no hope. The only evidence I have is my own success. Two weeks more;—two weeks more," he soliloquized, as he hurried on, "and then the ambitions of my boyhood days are crowned with success. But I have another ambition now, which comes with these college years. Lillie Baine must be mine. What haven't I done to keep her from Pen? My calendar of fasehood and down-right Judas actions would, if there was a God, damn me forever."

Thus he mused, until Lillie Baine was seated by his side in the carriage, and they were driving rapidly away down one of the shady streets. Even then Pen's words would keep coming, surging and crowding into his mind, notwithstanding he fought hard to dismiss the forebodings that hovered like unseparable companions, with the words, "You have not graduated yet." He was determined, however, to win by his own indomitable will and strength, which never yet had failed him, and make the most of this evening.

"It is very seldom wise," said Lin, "to talk your inmost thoughts aloud, but sometimes impulsive people will do so. I was just thinking, Miss Lillie," he went on, "that this seemed my first taste of Eden,—in fact, this very drive seems to be carrying me through the ivied entrance."

"I hope your experience, Mr. Brinkerhoff," said Lillie, smiling, "will not be of as short duration as a certain Biblical character."

"I would be willing," replied Lin, "to go out as Adam did, if you accompany me."

"Thank you," replied Lillie, "I do not care to be entertained with banishment."

"To tell you the candid truth, Lillie," said Lin, meditatively, "I have come to have a very poor opinion of myself. While the world says that my career, so far, has been successful, I know within myself that I would have been a far better boy, and man, if I could have seen

more of you and been stimulated with the hope that for a long, long time has been paramount to all else."

Lillie was not blind. She understood his meaning, and was very sorry that her classmate was so near-sighted. "He certainly knows," she thought, "I do not want more than his friendship, for I have nothing better to give him in return." She assumed a jesting manner, and said: "I do believe, Mr. Brinkerhoff, that you have the 'blues.' Cheer up. Commencement day is close at hand, and you are to be the star of our class."

"Lillie," said Lin, while his whole face was crimsoned over with determination, "I will be the happiest man living, if you will only make me so. My feelings that have been gathering force for so many months, can no longer be restrained within the limits of friendship, or held with its gossamer thread, for a silken web of far greater strength has been woven. Your light words are surely not an index, as rippling waters are, of a shallow friendship stream. No, it cannot be. Your feelings must have a depth to them. Mine, for you, Lillie, are deep and lasting, and stretch on out through futurity to the grave. You, above all else, are the object of my warmest and deepest affection. Will you not, dear Lillie, give me your promise to one day become my wife?"

She turned and looked deep into his face, and saw how madly earnest he really was. For a moment she could not speak; while Lin's suspense knew no bounds. Finally, in a low, earnest voice, that was now free from any jesting, she said: "Lin, I cannot answer you now as you wish, nor do I know that I ever can. What I say, though, shall be said with true womanly frankness. I have a true sisterly feeling for you, nothing more."

Lin made an effort to speak, but she motioned him to silence.

"If ever," she went on, "I feel different toward you, it will be at a time in the future. You have always been kind and generous to me, and no woman is blind or deaf to admiration from others. You say your affection for me is lasting, and stretches on and on to the grave. Does true and pure affection cease there or does it reach away beyond the grave?"

Lin could not answer her question, for it involved too much that was wearying and doubtful.

"You can always know," said Lillie, presently, "that I am your friend."

"And nothing more?" said Lin, frigidly. "That, Miss Baine, is what you mean,—why seek to evade the truth. You have rejected me, and it is needless for you to mask your refusal with well chosen words."

Lillie was too much pained with his cutting words, his changed and icy look, to reply. They rode on for a time in silence.

This was Lin's first disappointment. Never before had he been thwarted, because, as he said to himself, "I always have depended on myself, but the moment I attempt to depend on another, or seek to ally my destiny with this fair girl's, then disappointment sets in."

Shortly after this, he headed his horse toward the Ladies' Boarding Hall, and after assisting Lillie to alight, bade her a hasty good evening, and drove rapidly away, muttering to himself that it was a black Friday night for him.

As he wended his way home along the deserted streets, those words of Pen's rung like a tolling knell in his ears: "You have not graduated yet." "Oh!" said he, "it is all so dark and lonely. If I had Lillie Baine—ah! Lillie Baine—to go with me, I would not shrink. But no. She will not put her faith in me, by returning my love. She, like Pen, believes there is a God and a hereafter, while my belief only teaches me annihilation."

Presently he heard, or seemed to hear, a low murmuring voice, which said, "Why were you ever created, and permitted to thus learn the lesson of love, only to have the cup of anticipated happiness dashed rudely to the earth, your very heart strings torn and lacerated; left to live on for a time, in regret, and eventually to pass away and go back to dust? Is it true," continued the voice, "that this is the end? Is it forever? Is it an eternal sleep, from which there is no waking, down in the narrow grave, with grasses and flowers growing up, and the sun and stars looking down?" Then the voice

ceased. "It really does not look reasonable," soliloquized Lin. "Oh, if I only knew!"

He turned his steps toward the cemetery, for he felt that the tombstones and marble columns would be fit companions for his mood.

The night was beautiful, and as the old moon came slowly up, its soft light threw a mellow radiance over the landscape. He sat down on a rustic seat, which had been stationed there by some one who loved to come and in silence visit the white-robed dead. Away before him, like the streets of a sleeping city, stretched the aisle of tombstones, one side reflecting back the soft rays of the moon, and the other marking the commencement of the long shadows. The melancholy sighing of the wind stirred the evergreen boughs gently, very gently, as if fearful of waking the silent sleepers. His eyes fell on an epitaph near him, which said, "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." "Oh!" said he, aloud, "if I could only believe that, death indeed would lose its hideousness to me." He turned to another epitaph and read, "Oh! Death, where is thy sting? Oh! Grave, where is thy victory?" "Am I wrong? Am I wrong?" he groaned in anguish. "Is the Bible true, and philosophy only a bewildering and an alluring myth?" He looked up to the glittering stars above for an answer, but no answer came.

From early childhood he had gazed up at these diamonds of night, and wondered where they came from. But there they were still, as glittering and bright as when he was a child, studding the bending dome of Heaven, the waveless ocean of space.

"Will they forever and forever shine on in dumb silence—or are they indeed God's beacon torches to light the departing spirits of men up and up to a Heavenly home? I know," said Lin, "that the Bible answers these questions, but if I accept it, my philosophy must be renounced. She believes, yes, Lillie Baine believes, in a home beyond this life, a resurrection from the grave. Shall I yet hope for her or trample and crush the word hope from out my memory? Was this night's disappointment my recompense for past misdeeds and sins?

Were Pen's words prophetic? No! no!" cried he turning and walking swiftly homeward. "I will steel my voice, I will forget these trying, bewildering questions, and cleave to my philosophy. The day may be far distant, but it will come, when Lillie Baine will regret in bitterness her decision. I will go on as I have commenced, and win success and place my heel on every obstacle."

On reaching his room, he threw himself down on his bed. His clinched teeth and determined frown told all too plainly the course of his thoughts. Contrary to his expectations, he fell asleep. When he awoke, smothered sobs convulsed his frame; but why he wept he did not know. He could only remember that in his troubled dream he saw his mother kneeling beside him, wringing her hands in anguish.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THREE VILLAINS CAPTURED.

ON the very evening of the day that Lillie Baine rejected Lin Brinkerhoff's hand, a cypher message came to Hampton, addressed to Burt Lester under an assumed name. It requested his presence at once, and was signed by Lawyer Westover.

Accordingly, the next day found the detective in the metropolis, and at an early hour he wended his steps to the attorney's office. Arriving there, he was warmly greeted by Mr. Westover, who was in every sense of the word a perfect gentleman, possessed of all the shrewdness of his profession, yet endowed with a judicial turn of mind seldom met with. His greatest strength appeared in cases of the greatest emergency. In legal storms he was as immovable as the giant oak, while to the weak, and those in lowly life he was as gentle as an April shower, his sympathies ever being with the oppressed.

After they had conversed for some time in a deeply earnest conversation, Burt said, "This is surely a strange communication. However, I will go at nine o'clock to-

night to the place indicated, on Dearborn street, and learn what I can." Here he took a small piece of crumpled paper from his pocket, unfolded it and read again. This anonymous letter had been received by Mr. Westover through the mail, and read as follows :

"MR. WESTOVER :

"Sir:—If you will have Mr. Lester, the detective, meet me at exactly nine o'clock on Dearborn street, near the Crescent, any evening this week, he will learn something to his advantage. Tell him to carry a roll of paper in his left hand. He must come alone.

"Yours respectfully,

"_____."

It was with cloudy misgivings and a keen sense of danger, that Burt started from the Tremont, at just fifteen minutes before nine o'clock, to the place designated in the strange letter. He had taken the precaution beforehand, however, to have a cabman stationed near the place of meeting.

Arriving at the "Crescent," the detective took a turn or two up and down the walk. His right hand was inserted in the breast of his coat, firmly grasping his Colt's "navy," while his left hand, in which he carried a roll of paper, swung at his side.

Presently an old man came walking down the street. He was considerably stooped over and in his right hand he carried a staff-like cane. Coming up with Burt, he said, in a half audible voice, "Burt Lester?" The detective turned on the speaker quickly, but was motioned to silence. The old man then bent his seemingly aged and infirm steps toward the cab, closely followed by the detective.

"Have you a room ?" asked the stranger.

"I have—at the Tremont," replied Burt.

"Drive there at once," said the old man, and in a very steady voice for one so seemingly decrepit.

A little later they were set down at the hotel, and soon after reached the privacy of the detective's

room. When Burt turned from fastening the door he found himself face to face, not with an old man, but with an old acquaintance, Bob Bradfield, a brother detective.

In another instant two hands were outstretched, and Burt said, in a cheery voice :

"Bob Bradfield, by heavens. When did you leave England, and how in the world do you happen to be in Chicago ?"

"And why the devil," supplemented Bradfield, "am I writing letters about you and not signing them ?" As Bradfield said this, his twinkling eyes were speaking volumes, telling Burt how pleased he was at this meeting. "I am more than glad to see you, Burt ; you look as natural and unchanged as your friendship is unchanging."

"The same to you," replied Burt, in his cheerfulest tone, "but what are you doing here, Brad, anyway ?"

"Diving for pearls," replied Bradfield, "and this old man's make up is my diving suit, and it well nigh sweats me to death. I will not ask you," he went on, "what work you have in hand, for I am posted in part anyway."

"How did you drop on to what I was doing ?"

"I learned from the agency here that you had quit them several years ago, and were now operating on your own account. The manager said he furnished a detective from the force to assist you in shadowing a young chap by the name of Brinkerhoff, who is attending college somewhere, and that Lawyer Westover was the attorney in the case. I also learned that a large sum of money was the object of your long search."

"And as soon as you heard this," said Burt, smiling, "you wrote this anonymous letter ?"

"No, indeed," replied Bradfield. "It was weeks ago when I learned this. Much as I wanted to see you, I would not have been selfish enough to call you away from your sentinel post had I not some good news to communicate."

"News for me ?" queried Burt, impatiently.

"Yes," replied Brad, as he was usually called, "news

for you, but before I commence the narration of what I have to say, we will light up some of the finest cigars you ever whiffed at."

The cigars were soon lit and the blue rings of smoke curling away toward the open window.

"You see," said Bradfield, as he gave an uncommonly long pull at his cigar, "I am on a big chase, myself—one that has carried me all over England, and finally to America. About three months ago I tracked my prey to Cinapolis, and then to Chicago, and I will, I think, very soon have my man caged. A cousin of mine, who lives here is an employee in one of the National Banks. He is a fine fellow, a number one business man, and stands high with the bank president, Mr. Isaac Lomgard. In fact, I am quite proud of him for my cousin—don't know whether he can say as much for me or not. Three days ago I called at the bank a few minutes before it closed in the afternoon, to see my relative on a matter of business, and while there he entered on his books twenty-one thousand dollars of government bonds that had recently been purchased by a Miss E. Brinkerhoff."

"What!" said Burt, as he came to his feet in his transport of enthusiasm. "Are you sure you made no mistake in the name?"

"Sit down, Burt," said Bradfield, "don't be excited; I am perfectly sure of just what I am talking about."

Burt quieted down, and at Bradfield's request gave him an outline and history of the aggravating case he had now been wrestling with for so many years.

"To be sure," added Burt, "I have made other discoveries during the time, that have compensated me, and which, in all probability I would not have made, had it not been for this case. Now, Brad, my old friend, let me hear what you are following up." Saying this, Burt lit a fresh cigar, and settled back to play the part of a listener.

"The case I am on now," said Bradfield, "I have been at for three years. There was a tragedy committed in London—a murder and a robbery—by a man who bears a number of names. The victim was an old man who resided alone. He was known to be very wealthy,

and the murderer, whoever he was, has one finger missing from his left hand. I know this from the imprint in the earth in the murdered man's garden. In fact, his hand and foot marks were my only clue. At last I traced him to America, and found that he had made his headquarters at different cities along the Ohio River, and finally came to Chicago."

"What is his name?" asked Burt, impatiently.

"He has a half-dozen different names," replied Bradfield, "but his right name is Harlan Barretson."

"Barretson?" repeated Burt, then gave a low whistle and said, "well, how deucedly strange things come about. Harlan Barretson is the man," Lester went on, "that I succeeded once in thwarting."

It then came Bradfield's turn to grow interested and impatient. In a few words Burt told all he knew of him and his crimes in America.

Long into the night they sat conversing thus, to one another, and when at last they did throw themselves down to sleep a few hours, Burt found that to forget in sleep the glad news he had learned was impossible.

Over and over in his mind twirled the golden key to the mystery that had baffled him so long. Even when at last he did fall asleep, his dreams were as full of it as had been his waking thoughts.

We will leave them for a time, thus wrapt in slumber, and glide noiselessly out of their room and away through space to Hampton.

The night operator who succeeded Lin was on duty, and the hour was approaching midnight. A little back of the depot building, in the shadow of a stately tree, were four figures crouched down close together. Harry Baine's face can be dimly seen through the darkness, while the long, lithe individual at his side can be none other than the Inimitable Willets. The other two are old friends of ours. One is "Tobs" of the long ago, now usually called Uncle George Tobias. The other is Richard. It seems that both the latter had come to Hampton, a day or two before, to pay a short visit to the Inimitable and family.

Why they are thus secretly and silently, but no doubt

impatiently, waiting for the incoming train, is easily told.

Just before noon, while Willets was on duty, a message flashed over the wires from the station nearest the McGuffin farm to Cinapolis. It read as follows:

"To C. Mack, Cinapolis:

Come to-night. Hampton. Don't fail.

H. Barret."

Now this telegram of itself told very little, yet it had aroused Willets' suspicions to the utmost. He at once communicated the contents of this message to Harry Baine, and he also was of the opinion that it meant more than it said.

Accordingly, Richard and his uncle were invited to join them, as Willets said, "in laying for the great American wretch, the Consuming Cancer of the Age." "After he is tied, gentleman," the Inimitable went on, in a low voice, "that is, securely tied, I want you to just give Edward Willets a chance at him."

"You insist," said Richard, laughing, "upon having him securely bound before you have a chance at him?"

"My highly respected and greatly beloved brother-in-law," said Willets, bringing his long big-jointed forefinger into the attitude of admonition, "I freely admit, sir, that I have no great yearning to be entertained by or to entertain, C. McGuffin in a raw, unseasoned condition. Season him once with strong cords and I am at his service. There was a time, sir,—before I became the head of a cherished and cherishing family, before the fibers of my heart were wrapt about with the tender love of a noble woman,—that I viewed these matters differently. Then I had for a backer the cold, bleak and cheerless world. My entertainment consisted chiefly of pecuniary embarrassments and financial disasters, and, to be candid, the entertainment was such a long-winded affair that it actually grew monotonous, but thanks to the purse of my dear old Uncle Timothy Mannahan, the fortune I saw all along in perspective, hove in sight,—at a very critical time, too,—enabling me to purchase a

diamond ring for my lady fair, and provide ourselves with a cottage home."

"Hi will," said Tobs, "provide myself, you know, with ha 'ome hif Hi can get McGuffin, the bloody chap, to pay me back the money 'e so 'einously pilfered my pockets hof, you know."

The whistling of the incoming train put a stop to their whisperings.

The four emerged from the shadow of their retreat and walked cautiously up to the depot platform. There, sure enough, was a short stout man, who stepped off the car platform, but instead of a full beard he wore side whiskers, and then his apparel was more fashionable than the Phenomenal McGuffin wore in former years. If the Inimitable's companions at any time thought he would prove cowardly, their suspicions were quickly removed by what followed.

Heretofore we have seen that Willets possessed considerable skill as a pugilist. The brass-buttoned conductor, with lantern in hand, stepped inside the operator's room a moment, and the portly stranger sauntered back and forth looking into the open door. All this Harry Baine and his three companions were observing from their concealed point of observation.

Presently, the Inimitable, with one stride steps upon the platform, and a moment later is at the stranger's side, "How do you do, Mr. McGuffin," he says, and quickly the stranger turns about and confronts the long figure. Before the astonished stranger can reply, Willets asks, in his most courteous manner, if Mr. McGuffin wants to see Lin Brinkerhoff?

"I wanted to see young Brinkerhoff, but my name isn't McGuffin. You are mistaken."

Quicker than a flash the Inimitable with one powerful blow felled the stranger—who was none other than the Phenomenal McGuffin—to the platform's level. His three associates, who had been watching his movements with breathless suspense, now rushed forward, and in less time than it takes to tell it he was handcuffed and securely thonged.

"Not a word," said Harry, not a single lisp, or you are a dead man." Harry had had one bitter experience

of loitering, after capturing old Hinchey at Cinapolis, and now he proposed to act promptly. Accordingly McGuffin was hurried off toward the Hampton jail between Harry and the Inimitable, while Tobs and Richard followed close behind, carrying his satchel.

After he was securely lodged inside the jail, and saw that Tobs was one of his captors, he broke down entirely, and begged piteously for his life.

"Hi 'ave been waiting a good many years, you know," said Tobs, "for this time to come."

"I never did you any harm, Tobs," groaned the Phenomenal McGuffin.

"You stole three thousand dollars from me, han Hi 'ave known hit hall halong, but Hi suppose you think you paid the debt, you know, when you gave old Hinchey five thousand dollars to throw me hover the cliff."

McGuffin whimpered like a cur, and said he would tell everything if they would spare his life.

Harry said: "Your life, sir, is in no immediate peril, and you certainly can lighten your own crime in a measure, at least in our estimation, by giving such evidence as will enable us to find your brother, old Hinchey."

"Who sent that telegram to you?" asked Willets, who was standing near by.

"Harlan Barretson, and he is just as deep in as any of us," whiningly replied McGuffin.

"Where is he now?" inquired Richard.

"Both he and my brother Hinchey are at the cave. Oh, gentlemen, spare me. I will tell everything, and I want you to tell the judge I should go free."

"Come on, gentlemen," said Richard, "I know all too well where the cave is."

"If my brother tells you I ever stole anything but your money, Tobs, he tells a lie."

"Look here, McGuffin," said Richard, "I was a menial slave to your villainous brother. I was known then by the name of Dick Dare, so be careful, or your veracity will be questioned."

At this our four friends withdrew, leaving the Phenomenal groaning in the anguish of his sins that had overtaken him.

"Wait a moment," said the Inimitable, as the jailor was about to lock the heavy fastenings. Pushing the door open a little, Willets thrust his sandy-coated head inside, and said: "I say, my charming and submissive captive, how would you like to run for Congress in the second district? Or, perhaps, you would like to have your fortune told first, hey?"

With this parting salute they left the Phenomenal, and started for the cave. They made a circuitous route, and approached it very cautiously. When they were within about fifty yards of the rendezvous, Harry called a halt, and after telling them to await his return, crawled with cat-like stealth forward to reconnoiter.

When he drew near, he heard the indistinct hum of conversation. Finally he heard old Hinchey say, "I guess my dear brother did not get the message in time, or he would be here before this."

Carefully retreating to his companions, Harry gave the order to move on. A half hour's careful creeping through the bushes brought them all close up to the cave.

A light was burning fretfully, and by its glare they could see the two forms within stretched out at full length, seemingly fast asleep. Old Hinchey undoubtedly was, for he snored most unmercifully, but this very evidence of his sleeping no doubt kept his companion from enjoying an interrupted repose.

Richard carefully removed some boards that were unfastened, and in a moment more the two sleepers had four determined and brave men looking down at them.

The thongs were then made ready. Richard and Willets each had strong slip-noosed cords in their hands, and Harry stood with a loaded revolver in either hand. At a signal from him, a noose was carefully slipped around the sleeping men's arms, and then, at the second signal, quickly and tightly drawn. The sleepers awoke, and in their bewilderment could hardly comprehend their situation.

Finally, however, they realized their condition and then their cursing knew no bounds. But all the cursing they could do, availed them nothing. They were hurried

back to Hampton, and all three of the captives were heavily chained.

The morning of the following day broke clear and bright, and not a soul in Hampton knew of the victory against evil doers, which one night had brought forth.

Harry Baine sent a message to Chicago, addressed to Lester, care of Horatio Westover, and ordered it to be delivered at once.

The two detectives, Burt Lester and Bob Bradfield, had just seated themselves in the spacious dining room at the Tremont, when Lawyer Westover approached them with an eager look of suspense on his face.

The greetings were exchanged, and the telegram handed to Burt, who, hastily breaking the seal, read:

"Lester, care of Horatio Westover,
"Chicago, Illinois:
"Old Hinchey, McGuffin and Barretson await your pleasure in the Hampton Bridewell.
"HARRY BAINE.'

CHAPTER XXXVI.

PARTED FOREVER.

IMAGINATION is the focus rays of all our perceptive powers. It sees brighter pictures than were ever painted on canvas or written within the lid of fiction.

The brush fails the artists softest touch and his richest thought, so, also, words fail to express the deepest pathos and the richest ideas of the author.

The reader may be able to imagine the surprise and pleasure of the two detectives when Harry Baine's telegram was read, but words cannot express them. Mr. Westover was made acquainted wiith the facts learned by Burt the previous evening, and he fully shared in

the happy anticipation of a speedy close of the tedious case.

A message was at once sent to our old friend Stephen Baine, requesting his presence in Chicago. As to the three notorious prisoners, we will not pause here longer than to say that Harlan Barretson was given over to the English detective, Bob Bradfield, who at once started for England with him. Old Hinchey and the Phenomenal McGuffin waived examination, and were committed for trial.

The days rolled quickly on, and another week had almost joined company with the past before Burt, the detective, in company with Uncle Stephen Baine and Lawyer Westover, set out for Covesville.

The tediousness of the all-night ride in a crowded railway coach we will leave them to endure alone, while we will wing our way through space and with the shades of evening that hover between day and twilight descend into the Campus grounds at Chalmer University.

'Tis Friday night again. Only one week since Lin took his first ride with Lillie Baine into Eden, as he termed it, and from which, like Adam, he was speedily banished.

The week had been oppressively long to Lillie, for she felt very unhappy. Lin Brinkerhoff has never condescended to speak to her since their ride.

"Is it possible," she soliloquized, "that true and pure affection could so quickly turn to indifference, and even scorn? No, no; Lin thought he was in earnest, but he was not. His infatuation was seasoned too much with selfishness. Had I told him a falsehood his selfish nature would have been satisfied. But I do not and cannot love him, except as a sister, and why could he not have seen as much, and been satisfied. The promise I made, to ever show him the kindness of a true friend, I will keep. Poor, unbelieving Lin, how I wish he would forsake his skepticism; throw aside his philosophies, and become a good, true Christian man! How different," she thought, "was Pen Pembrooke. I don't care if he has criticized me unmercifully to Lin, he no doubt was candid in what he thought."

While Lillie Baine, in the solitude of her room, was thus musing to herself, quite a spirited conversation was going on between those who were occupying her thoughts.

"Philosophical reasoning, my dear friend," Pen was saying, "is often faulty."

"You said a moment ago," responded Lin, "that reason was divine and come from the immortal part of our being."

"Nevertheless, replied Pen, "such reasoning as you resort to, clouds and veils over the truth with its fallaciousness."

"But," retorted Lin, "if reason is divine, it ought to be able to grasp the truth. The fact is, Pen, my boy," Lin went on, "there is a wide-spread belief in the world —I cannot say it is universal—that some kind of a religious creed is a necessity, Our ancestors, away back thousands of years ago, were afflicted with the same belief. Hence they built altars, even in the morning of existence, and worshipped first one thing and then another, on down through the cycles of time. Sometimes they worshipped a golden calf, and sometimes something else. Perpetually they were changing their idols, and even in these latter times the God of one man's creed and belief is not satisfactory nor acceptable to his neighbor."

"I found an extract the other day, my dear Lin," said Pen, with great earnestness. "It is taken from the writings of Hamilton, a philosopher of some note."

"I know of him," replied Lin, "and have just sent for his work called "Philosophy of the Condition."

"Exactly," replied Pen, "that is the very work this extract is taken from. I have it in my scrap book, and will read it to you. Here is what he says: 'There are two sorts of ignorance; we start from the one, we repose in the other; they are the goals from which and to which we tend; and the pursuit of knowledge is but a course between two ignorances, as human life is itself only a traveling from grave to grave. The highest reach of human science is the scientific recognition of human ignorance.'"

"Now, Lin, this plainly expresses the outcome of all sincere philosophers. Their writings, as a rule, are but the expressions of darkly clouded, bewildered intellects. They seek to account for the workings of an Infinite Being by finite reasoning, and when they come to biblical facts that they cannot account for, they hedge themselves behind the bulwark of disbelief. I will freely admit," continued Pen, "that there are many things which I do not understand within the leaves of the Bible, but it bears unmistakable marks of its divinity, and as such I accept it as the inspired word of God. Men have died cruel death, because of their religious convictions. Christ our Saviour was crucified, but he rose from the grave in which he slept, and came forth fulfilling prophecies and bearing witness to the truth of the Bible. While it is true that 'we see through a glass darkly,' yet, my dear Lin, it is better than the Egyptian darkness of doubt through which you are groping your way blindly, with no hope, no faith, no expectation of the breaking dawn of eternity. Their doubts will be unknown, and all clouds and mysteries will be cleared from our horizon."

Here Pen ceased talking, for he saw what he had vainly looked for these many, many months. Two great tears were trembling on Lin Brinkerhoff's cheek. His voice was husky as he replied :

"Pen, you are little aware of how helpless I at times feel. I will humble my pride and confess that my disbelief makes me very miserable. Like a lonely mariner philosophic studies have decoyed me far out at sea. The boundless space around is like the pathless ocean, and I the mariner, have wearily floundered on and on, without compass or chart. Philosophy has told me for years, in midnight whisperings, in the morning and evening sunlight, in the blustry wintry winds, that there was no safe harbor of faith, and no such thing as casting the anchor of hope. That all was a myth and a tradition." Here Lin paused. He was unable to say more, but bowing his head on his hands, wept like a child.

"Ah, Lin," said Pen with great emotion, "confess your ignorance and acknowledge your finite ability to

be subordinate to His who said, 'Blessed are they that weep, for they shall be comforted.' Throw aside the fallacies of your proud intellect, and turn your face toward God."

Lin rose from his chair and turned away his face. Neither spoke a word, and for a full hour he walked the room, wrapt in deep meditation.

At last he approached Pen, and said in a penitent voice, "To-morrow, my old friend, will be twenty-one years since we were born into this world at the little village of Hampton. You started out differently from what I did. You believed there was a God, and I cannot, to-night, remember when I did not disbelieve. Oh, that I had possessed your faith in a Saviour, instead of worshiping my ambition! I have been going heedlessly and blindly on, my pride asserting that my own reason was a sufficient guide, and at last it has lead me to the barren coast of despair. I look about me and see the ruinous wreck of a false, bewildering and benighting philosophy."

His proud spirit was at last humbled, and falling on his knees he sobbed forth his first prayer to the true and living God, the author and finisher of all good works. He fervently prayed that he might never again become entangled in the philosophy that had so masked and blinded him, and that its gilded fruits, that had ever turned to bitterness in his hands, might never be plucked by others. He asked for strength to throw aside forever the doubtful conjectures and the metaphysical abstractions that had so long hovered about and engulfed him in their gloomy shadows.

Pen was greatly moved, and remembered with a new meaning the words, "There is more joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over the ninety and nine that go not astray."

Long into the night these two, now friends in truth, conversed. Lin was not one to do things by halves, and he frankly confessed to Pen his love for Lillie Baine, and how only a few evenings before she had rejected him. He also, through tears of humbled pride, told him how wickedly he had planned to keep him and Lillie

Baine from being friends, and, said he, "there is another misdeed of youth, dear Pen, that weighs heavily on me. The deed was committed nine long years ago, and miserable years, indeed, have they been to me.

"The melancholy sighing of the dismal winds have seemed, during all these years, my fittest companions. Should I tell you what misdeed it was you would love me less and hate me more, so I will pray that you may never know. Those, however, that were injured by my sin shall be made whole, and the clouds of suspicions which have at times hung like a pall of gloom over the innocent, shall be cleared away."

Good nights were then exchanged, and the angel of love that guards the children of men through the sleeping hours of night, saw a kneeling form in either room, and with joy listened to them both praying to the same God.

The morning came tardily on. A misty rain was falling from the lowering clouds, that seemed no higher up than the tallest tree tops and tapering church spires. Saturday, too, the holiday of the week. The breakfast hour was over, and the inmates of the dormitories were in their rooms again.

Charlie and Freddie Bethel dropped in to make a neighborly call with their cousin, Penfield Pembrooke. Lin sat, as many another student did that morning, looking out of the window down on the wet grass in the campus—before their callers came he had been talking to Pen cheerfully and hopefully of the faith that had dawned within him, and together they had been planning how best to celebrate their twenty-first birthday.

Presently some neighboring room-mate dropped in to pass the time of day, and announced the startling intelligence that "it was a rainy, dark morning." Lin left the entertaining of callers to Pen, and stared abstractedly out at the dismal clouds. So dark, indeed, were they, that he could see but indistinctly across the grounds. Those words of Pen's, "You have not graduated yet," kept climbing up on top of all other thoughts, and made him nervous and miserable. Presently he started up and pointed out of the window. Pen observed the gesture,

and looking across the campus lawn discovered three men coming through the gate.

"Do you see them?" shouted Lin. "They are coming here to this very room. Coming for me!"

Pen looked with astonishment at his room-mate and saw that his every feature betokened wild excitement. His eyes were distended, and the color had faded from his face.

"I am lost!" shrieked Lin, in a mad frenzy, "forever lost! The ambition of my boyhood is never to be realized. Ah!" cried he, turning to Pen, "your words were prophetic—I never will, no, never, never, graduate!"

His frightful look and writhing gestures were such as might become a raving maniac. Indeed Pen shared the belief of the others present that Lin had lost his reason. Across the campus grounds came the three men, muffled up with huge rubber coats that came well down to the tops of their mud besplashed boots.

Sure enough, they inquired for one Lin Brinkerhoff. A moment more they were shown into the room. Then it was that Lin ceased his raving, and gave way to tears. Presently he looked up, though not a word had been spoken by either of the three new comers. He brushed his tears away, and advancing to the old gentleman, said, in a deep, husky voice:

"Mr. Stephen Baine, almost nine years ago, when I was only a lad of twelve, I stole from you fourteen thousand dollars. I do not tell you this as news, for when I first saw you coming through the college grounds something told me that you knew all. In my trunk I have your old satchel. Your money has been invested, and I have not only all the principal, but nearly every cent of the interest it has earned."

"You, then," said Mr. Baine, "are the thief?"

"I am, indeed, the thief," answered Lin. "I alone. No one else must be implicated. To one person, my sister Edith, I confided my secret, but promised her that every cent should be returned so soon as I graduated. Alas, sirs, that was the vain ambition that prompted the act. Think for a moment of my youth. Many persons

in riper years have been tempted, and yielded to far less temptations. When the step was once taken it seemed to me, as it does to other men who go astray, that it was too late to right the wrong, just then. For months I kept the secret all alone. Have I regretted the act? I regretted it, sirs, within an hour after it was done, and neither by day nor night have I been free from the accursed phantom, that with the years has grown more and more hideous, and hovered over me like a blighting demon. Have you, gentlemen, sons or young brothers? If so, think what they might have done had they been tempted as I was, and then deal with me as you see fit, remembering those lines of Byron's that have burned themselves into my memory, where he says:

> 'There are crimes, made
> Venial by the occasion, and temptations,
> Which nature cannot master or forebear!'"

Pen, through his tears, saw great drops trickling down the old man's face, and down the cheeks of the detective and the lawyer, but whether they were drops of rain from their hat rims, or tears of sorrow, he never knew.

"You may," said the old man, in a husky voice, "accompany us to our rooms at the hotel."

A few moments more and Lin was in readiness. He took Pen's hand, but could not frame or pronounce a single syllable. Pen felt his hand tremble as it closely clasped his own. Then, bending close to Lin's ear, he said:

"I am still your friend and will ever be, and when permitted will come to see you. Please God, I will be as true to you in adversity as I have ever been in the days of prosperity."

Thus they parted—parted forever.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

AT LAST.

OLD Hinchey and his brother Charles lay in prison until the court session came around. The Phenomenal McGuffin lost no opportunity to speak in his own cause, by denouncing his brother as the real transgressor. Like a whimpering cur, he, in spirit, crawled in the dust at any one's feet who would listen to his begging for mercy.

Old Hinchey pursued a different course. He seldom spoke to any one. Day by day he grew weaker and weaker, and bleached out whiter and whiter. His eyes grew larger as his cheeks sank in. From the time of his capture, he seemed to have given up all hope of anything better than the punishment that awaited him.

Sometimes he would crouch down in his cell—in the very darkest corner—bow his head upon his hands, and never stir for hours. Like a jaded animal that had been chased for days, he seemed completely tired out, and even glad that the wearying chase was over. His submission was one of resignation. A low mumble sometimes escaped him, but whether it came from penitent thoughts or not, no one ever knew.

The day before the trial came on, McGuffin thinking, no doubt, it would benefit his cause, returned to Tobs his three thousand dollars and interest for one-and-twenty years.

When Tobs received it, he remarked, in his "Hinglish" way, "Hi thought Hi would get hit hafter awhile you know."

"Sure, Mister McGuffin," said old Tim, who was present, "and wasn't I afther tellin' on ye's many a time that ye would be the death of yourself yet, I don't know?"

The morning of the trial finally came on, and the case was called. It lasted the entire week, but the twelve

jurors made quick work in agreeing on the verdict of guilty. Then the judge, after he had cleared his throat a great many times, said :

"Of all the wretched creatures steeped in all forms of crime, with whom I have had to deal, the Messers McGuffin, Henry and Charles, are the deepest-dyed. Both are now old men, yet from their infancy almost, have they been offenders of the law. They have infested all classes of society under their many garbs. One has spilled the blood of innocent men and attempted others ; while the other has stood ready with an open purse to pay for these wicked deeds. I can discover no difference in the enormity of their crimes."

When these words were uttered, C. McGuffin groaned aloud. Until then he had supposed that he would be sentenced lightly, because of his evidence against his brother. He was forgetting that evidence against them both was so plentiful as to be almost at a discount.

"Twelve jurors," continued the judge, "have found both these prisoners guilty of the crimes of which they have been accused. It therefore becomes my unpleasant duty to sentence both to imprisonment in the penitentiary for a term of ninty-nine years, or during their natural lives, at hard manual labor."

It was a very affecting scene to see these two brothers marching side by side out along the corridors of the court room, and away to their doomed life. Side by side they trudged along through the streets toward the prison in sullen silence, stooped with age and loaded down with past misdeeds. Their gray locks were blown about by the evening wind, which seemed, as it sighed through the tree tops, to be breathing forth a melancholy dirge, and repeating in its dismal chant, "Win-ning winds—no-longer ; win-ning winds—no-longer."

Pen was noticeably saddened by the sight, and was glad the case was over. He had been present during the session as a witness, as was also Richard and the Inimitable Edward Willets.

As they walked down the street toward the depot, preparatory to returning home, Willets, observing Pen's sad face, said :

"Cheer up, cheer up, my charming friend, cheer up

The sentence, sir, that you have heard passed is in every way in perfect keeping with the eternal fitness of things."

"I know it is right," replied Pen, "to send these two brothers, old men as they are, where they can do no more crime, Society demands it, but really it looks hard. These brothers are now both whitened over with the frosts of age. How different, Mr. Willets, how different it might have been."

"True, sir, very true," replied the Inimitable, "but let me say to you, Pen, you, who in youth was my charming companion—for a short time, that is,—as also in manhood, you are my pride, that these two fiends have collectively, understand me, sir, I say collectively, committed a long calendar of crimes, so lengthy, indeed, that there is not a single docket in the state large enough to contain them, and because of these, they are doomed —fine word, that, especially when used in connection with sentenced criminals—and as Whittier has most graphically and poetically said :

'For this they share a felon's cell,
That fittest earthly type of hell.'

Let me see," the Inimitable went on, "the last time before this that you saw the Phenomenal McGuffin, you were in a box underneath his wagon, and your next meeting was here when the tables were slightly turned, he being in the box and underneath his sentence. Slight difference, my charming fellow, slight difference in your favor."

When they shook hands at parting, it was with a promise, on Pen's part, that he would at an early day make his old home at Hampton a visit, and during his sojourn there would accept the Inimitable's hospitalities.

On reaching home at Grandfather Pembrooke's Pen found a letter awaiting him. He hastily broke the seal, and saw that it was from Lin, and read as follows :

'DEAR PEN :

"I will not name the place from whence I write, for if I did, it would be but a point of the compass indicating

my whereabouts. Hence, not wishing to reveal my place of retreat I omit it. I do not wish to be known by those who have known me in past years, or even by them remembered.

"I learned that you delivered the Valedictory Address, and I cannot refrain from telling you how glad I am that the honor fell to so worthy a student. Old Mr. Baine said he did not have the heart to arrest me; and after his money was returned to him, kindly let me go away,—away, oh! so far from every one. He little thought I would bury myself so completely as I have. A burial, dear Pen, from which there is no resurrection.

"For years the cloud of my guilt tremblingly hung just over me, and at last it broke, tarnishing forever my name. Mr. Baine gave me his promise that mother and Edith should never want, and hence I am relieved from that worry. My old mother's loss of myself, her only son, is nobody's gain. I am but suffering the price of my sins.

"Out of the little window in front of me lies a church-yard with many sunken graves. The white slabs of marble record whose dust it is that sleeps below. But, in a few years—only a few, dear Pen,—and the marble slabs will also crumble away, the records of the sleeping be lost to man, and even their memories fade into a forgotten past. It tells me that the hopeful, the ambitious, the proud, the despondent, the innocent, the guilty, the wounded and broken-hearted, alike will, at last, meet on one common level and mingle their dust in one common clay.

'Oh! why should the spirit of mortal be proud?'

"Good-by, dear Pen, good-by. The one thing I wanted to say, has not yet been said, 'Tell Lillie in her happiness to sometime join you in thinking of me, the erring wanderer, who will strive on and on with a firm hope of meeting you both where parting comes no more. Thus do I pay the price of Mammon and a vain ambition.

"Farewell, dear Pen, farewell,

"PIN BRINKERHOFF."

The summer wore itself away until the ripest weeks were reached, and with them came a visitor to the old New England home, an old friend of ours, Burt Lester.

Kittie Pembrooke, like the last of the summer weeks, was in the ripeness of her beauty. On a pleasant sunny morning, a few days after his arrival, they were in the music room. She had been playing some favorite pieces for him, and when the last notes of her rich full voice died away, Burt repeated :

"Awake, and let me dream again."

"And still you remember," said Kittie, laughing low and musical, "that old song."

Burt looked tenderly down at the handsome woman by his side, and knew, as he had known for years, that she was indeed noble and true. Then reaching out his arms to her, he said, passionately, "Kittie, my own love, would you have me forget them ?"

For an answer she placed her hands in his, nor resisted when he encircled her slender waist with his strong arm. When a little later they walked out into the warm sunlight, and down through the lawn, arm-in-arm, Kittie looks up beamingly into her companion's radiant face, and mischievously inquires, "Was this, dear Burt, the other question you were going to ask ?" He remembers her allusion, and quickly replies, "Yes, my darling—the case has developed."

In the November following, on Thanksgiving Day, the New England holiday of the year, they were married. Uncle Stephen Baine and family, including Harry and his patient wife, poor blind Emily, were there. Lillie Baine and little Bertha Pembrooke soon became warm friends. Bertha in great confidence confesses to Lillie that she can't help thinking lots of her because brother Pen does.

This brings the color quickly to Lillie's face, and when Pen, coming up just then, inquires what makes her face so red, she positively refuses to tell him. Richard, the old bachelor, who is sitting near, good-naturedly laughs and says that he himself will tell Pen by and by.

The whirring spindles in the loom of time, like the sands of life, go ceaselessly on. The winter at last gives way to spring, and with it comes the April showers and early blossoms.

A good many letters have passed between Greenwood and Dairyfield Farm. Pen insists, however, that no stronger adjective than "friendship" can be applied to them.

Old Grandfather Pembrooke takes Pen's hand in his, and, with a knowing look, good-naturedly asks: "Ah, Pen, are you quite sure of what you say?"

"To be candid, grandfather," replies Pen, confusedly, as he smoothed back the snowy locks from the old man's brow and stroked his long white beard, "I am not real sure."

Shall we leave them thus? Pen Pembrooke and Lillie Baine absorbed in love's sweet dream of happiness? Or, shall we go farther, and tell how, on a certain day, a few months later, there was a happy wedding at Dairyfield Farm?

Yes, thus it was, and Pen's wish that he might row Lillie Baine over the stream of life, became a reality.

Our parting wish to them is, that singing birds may ever warble their sweetest notes, as they perch on the vining ivy beneath their window; and that the gentle winds of summer and the melancholy winds of winter will ever be Winning Winds to win them away from the gloaming shadows toward the sunny side.

Such is Life:
Between the sunlight the shadows come,
Between the shadows the sunlight falls.

THE END.

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